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No.108 December 1992

Tenth Planet 4 - The Return!!

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Pull-out souvenir
Blakes 7 poster
inside

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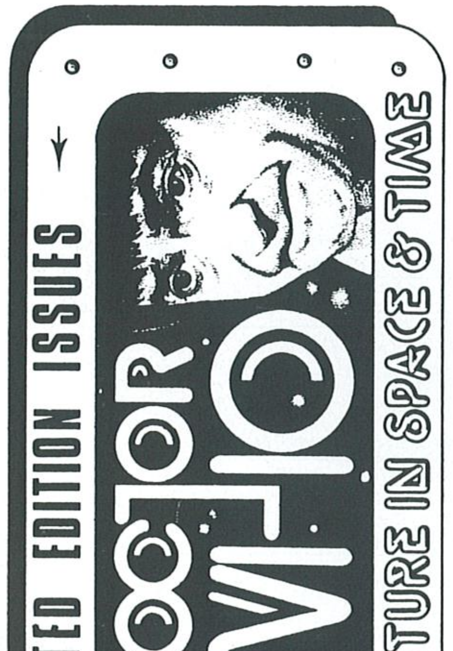

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Editor • David Gibbs
Executive Editor • Gary Leigh
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Print deadlines are awkward things at the best of times, but sometimes you want to scream. Such as when you hear that episode four of *The Tenth Planet* has been returned, and your latest issue is just rolling off the presses. Nevertheless, I trust that a three-week delay in hearing the news won't diminish your appreciation of the return of another landmark in Doctor Who's history. Equally, it is frustrating that this issue will go on sale just two days before episode one of *The Dæmons* is finally re-screened. Topical news magazines don't like to be scooped by the Radio Times, but there is a limit to how frequently we can publish to cater for BBC indecision!

Who news aside, the bulk of this issue is devoted to Blake's 7, as a kind of tribute to mark both the end of the BBC Video releases next month and the programme's 15th anniversary. We have been all too aware in the past that our coverage of Doctor Who tends to eclipse that of other equally worthy British programmes, and trust that this issue will go some small way towards redressing the balance.

DAVID

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Cover: a publicity shot from the fourth season of Blake's 7.
Page 14: Another stunning painting by Pete Wallbank. Pete can be contacted for possible commissions at 14 St Matthew's Road, Burnt Wood, Walsall, Staffordshire WS7 9DU.

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Tenth Planet 4 returned

BBC plan February video release

A version of *The Tenth Planet 4*, the most sought-after missing episode, has been retrieved by Adam Lee of BBC Archives from a current BBC employee.

Rumours about the episode existing have been circulating for many years now, ever since the episode was loaned to BLUE PETER in 1973. Pressure is believed to have been put on the employee to return the episode.

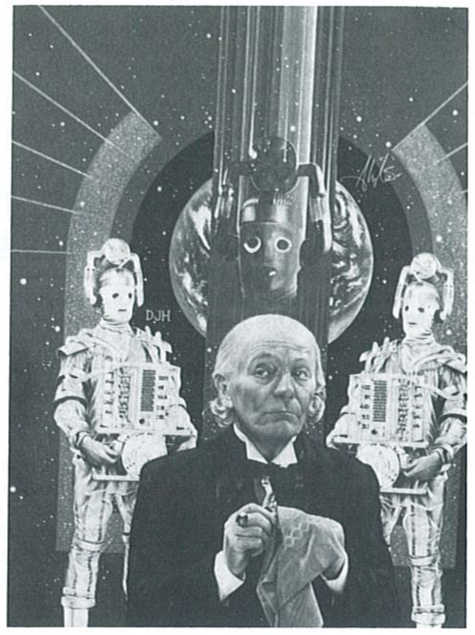
All four episodes of *The Tenth Planet* were handed to Lee on 2 one-hour reels of early home videotape, used mainly in the 60s and early 70s. These tapes can only be viewed on a Shibaden machine, few of which are still in existence, and the reels are currently being held by Steve Bryant at the National Film Library, who posess such a machine. The NFL hope to confirm the clarity of the episode around the time this issue goes to press, but the tapes were not able to be viewed until November 10th.

The tapes are not original mastertapes, but on the same format as eight episodes of STEPTOE AND SON which were recently returned to the BBC. These were originally run off by an engineer from the 2-inch master tapes of the 1970 season for the writers Galton and Simpson. Three of these episodes were painstakingly restored frame by frame for the recent BBC video release under the collective title of A Winter's Tale.

However, it remains to be seen what the quality of *The Tenth Planet 4* will be like, and whether it will be suitable to release complete on BBC Video. Hopefully it will have been professionally copied with a 'flying spot machine', in which case the picture quality would, whilst not being up to normal broadcast standards, be acceptable — alternatively it could have been copied by the primitive technique of pointing a camera at a screen, and would therefore be virtually unwatchable.

It must be stressed that at the time of going to press no one has been able to view the tapes and confirm even that they contain *The Tenth Planet*, much less the picture quality. However, it does seem likely that the long-awaited Hartnell finale is now complete, and that the rumours were true all along. Confirmation from the NFL's engineers is expected within days.

All this does now shed doubt on BBC Video's proposed schedule of DOCTOR WHO releases for 1993. It has been reported that links had already been recorded for a release of *The Tenth Planet* 1-3, with narration covering the then-missing episode four. BBC Video have indicated that if episode four is remotely watchable then the patchwork release will be hurriedly replaced with a complete version for possible release in February. Some fans have taken the fact that the BBC are obtaining clearances for a video release as definite confirmation of the episode's existence, but even they have not seen it as of November 9th.


The cover for next year's reprint of Gerry Davis's Target novelisation of *The Tenth Planet*, painted by Alister Pearson.

- It is also rumoured that the four-part tape of what remains of *The Reign of Terror* may be pulled, due to an unfavourable advance reaction from fans …
- January's release of *Silver Nemesis* will contain an additional ten minutes or so of previously unseen footage. See next month's *DWM* for further details.
- Eric Saward has now signed a contract to allow *Resurrection of the Daleks* to be released by BBC Video next year.

● **STOP PRESS:** The tape labelled *Tenth Planet 4* was viewed by NFL engineers on November 10th. Unfortunately it did not contain the claimed episode, and we must sadly conclude that this was either an honest mix-up of tapes, or an elaborate hoax.

A complete set of Dalek books?

IN ADDITION to the final two Troughton novels, *Power of the Daleks* and *Evil of the Daleks*, to be published in July and August of next year, there could soon be a Dalek full-house. Eric Saward appears to be relenting over his stance that his two Dalek stories would never see print because of Roger Hancock and Terry Nation's "unreasonable" demands.

"I'm prepared to consider them now," he recently told *DWB*. "Their demands for a cut have now gone down to a third of everything, as opposed to 60% of the royalties, which is still a lot because you don't make that much money out of books anyway. Whether they do come out is now up to Terry Nation and Roger Hancock, and how reasonable they are prepared to be — I'm not prepared to do them for tuppence ha'penny!"

● The novelisations of *Power of the Daleks* and *Evil of the Daleks* had been stalled for many years over the matter of a copyright fee payable to the Daleks' creator Terry Nation.

Apparently John Peel reached an agreement with Nation some time ago to write the books. However, Nation, upset by Target's publication of *Remembrance of the Daleks* and the treatments of his rights, refused to allow the publication of any further Dalek material until Virgin "apologised".

Ben Aaronovitch, author of both the *Remembrance* script and book, objected to sharing his fee with Terry Nation. Although previous novelisers of Dalek stories had split a fee with Nation (such as John Peel and Terrance Dicks), these were usually adaptations of Nation's original scripts. In the case of *Remembrance*, the work was all Aaronovitch's, and he saw no reason why he should share a fee simply for using characters and concepts created by Nation.

Nation has told US fan group The Prydonian Renegades that it wasn't the money that concerned him, but the principle. Were he to allow someone else to use the Daleks for profit, he might lose his copyright. Virgin went ahead regardless, and published *Remembrance* without his permission, resulting in the impasse.

When Virgin came up with a proposal for a BLAKE'S SEVEN large-format book (Nation of course holding the rights to BLAKE'S SEVEN), Nation used this as a negotiating tool to extract an apology from Virgin, clearing the way for Peel's novelisations.

With thanks to the Prydonian Renegades

● Two new non-fiction DOCTOR WHO books are provisionally scheduled for release late in 1993. November will see the publication of *Timeframe* — an illustrated history of DOCTOR WHO, while December sees *Doctor Who: The Handbook — The Sixth Doctor* from Virgin.

Nation and Equity pose twin dilemma for UK Gold

UK GOLD started on schedule on November 1st, depsite the threat of a legal action from Equity. The actors' union has threatened the BBC/Thames satellite station with an injunction unless their members (ie. actors) receive more money before the end of November. It was a failure to agree terms with Equity that sank SuperChannel's attempts to raid the BBC archives several years ago.

Of particular concern to DOCTOR WHO fans is the news that Terry Nation and his agent Roger Hancock have failed to reach an agreement by which the station can show Dalek episodes or any others written by Nation. This had the effect of forcing UK Gold to draw up its first three-week schedule as follows:

week 1: *An Unearthly Child/*
Edge of Destruction (1)
week 2: *Edge of Destruction* (2)/
The Aztecs
week 3: *Planet of Giants/The Rescue*

Although *The Sensorites* is also omitted chronologically, it hasn't come up against similar problems and will also be shown — apparently UK Gold are keen to see stories slot neatly into their 5-a-week schedule (Monday to Friday at 5.30pm), so *The Sensorites* is likely to start week four, to be followed by *The Romans.*

The lack of Daleks is a blow to the fledgling station, who used the creatures in their pre-publicity to entice viewers. It is hoped that Nation and Hancock will relent, otherwise all Dalek stories (whether written by Nation or not), plus *The Keys of Marinus* and *The Android Invasion*, will not appear on UK Gold.

UK GOLD

- As is now common practice with many satellite stations, the ident UK Gold is permanently inlaid in the bottom right-hand corner of the screen, a blow for most fans hoping to obtain a complete library of broadcast quality recordings. Many will also have been irritated by the intrusion of adverts for all manner of products, from fizzy drinks to fabric conditioners, breaking each episode in two, although it is reassuring to know that advertisers are placing faith with DOCTOR WHO to promote their goods!

The Dæmons up to Christmas

BY NOW everyone should be aware that *The Dæmons* is commencing a five-week run on Fridays on BBC2 at 7.15pm, from November 20th. (As with news of *The Tenth Planet* 4, this story broke while *DWB 107* was at the printers!) Its sudden and later-than-expected timeslot gives credence to BBC2's original claim that the repeat — originally scheduled for September — was postponed due to a timing error and replaced by SOUNDS OF THE SIXTIES.

The newly-restored colour five-part Jon Pertwee classic will run up to December 18th, followed by a two-week break over Christmas and New Year, with the season resuming on January 8th with a six-part Tom Baker story (*The Seeds of Doom* is currently under consideration). With the LATE SHOW team opting for longer stories, this is likely to be followed by a Davison four-parter, *The Two Doctors* and a four-part McCoy, although nothing beyond *The Dæmons* has yet been confirmed.

An article on the re-colourisation of *The Dæmons* appeared in the *Radio Times*, coinciding with the repeat of episode one, and included contributions from Ian Levine and Palph Montagu.

- THE SILURIANS is the latest story to undergo the colour restoration process, with results on a par with *The Dæmons. Terror of the Autons* is considered to be the most successfully restored story so far, with episode one in particular winning most plaudits for its outstanding clarity.

- DOCTOR WHO is expected to pull in impressive ratings, thanks to its well-deserved and long-awaited *Radio Times* feature — following on from a similar one with reference to UK Gold just three weeks earlier! — and its timeslot. Pitted against ELDORADO (current Friday night ratings, 4 million) and ten minutes of CORONATION STREET, it is hoped that the later-than-usual timeslot will attract many adult followers of the Doctor — although for the first episode of its run *The Dæmons* is placed directly against BBC1's annual *Children in Need* evening.

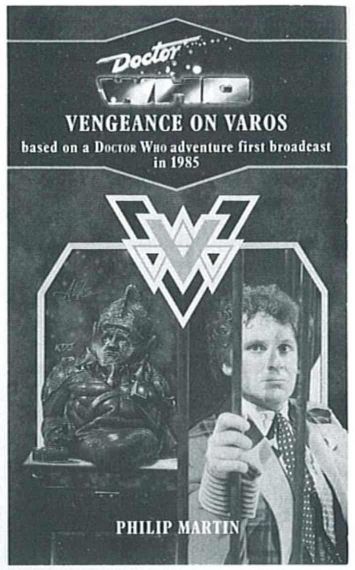
BBC2 have yet to put a foot wrong in their scheduling of cult tv fantasy series. STAR TREK is gathering up to 4.5 million viewers, THE MAN FROM UNCLE just under three million, and even THE ADDAMS FAMILY is gaining momentum (it recently reached 11th place with 2.76 million). While it has not performed as well as might have been hoped, STINGRAY is garnering an average of three million, just one million more than the THUNDERBIRDS Sunday repeats and THE INVADERS, around 2.5 million.

- In a blaze of non-publicity, BBC1's GOING LIVE are showing the STAR TREK animated series of 1973, generally around 9.20am. Despite the removal of the end credits and scrolling captions over the opening titles, it's welcome to see this under-rated series back on terrestrial tv — even if they are reluctant to tell anyone about it!

STOP PRESS
10th November

Rumours are coming in suggesting that BBC Video have decided against renewing John Nathan-Turner's contract following an unprecented mass fan outcry over the proposed 'special' releases for 1993. It now appears that all such specials have now been pulled from the schedule, the only one remaining being the 25th anniversary celebration now purported to be produced by David Jackson and Adrian Rigelsford.

FULL DETAILS NEXT MONTH...



Above: the covers for Target's January reprints of *The Twin Dilemma* and *Vengeance on Varos.*

A reminder that December 3rd sees the release of *Transit,* by Ben Aaronovitch, and *The Fourth Doctor Handbook* by Howe-Stammers-Walker (see review on page 26), plus reprints of *The Ark* and *The Celestial Toymaker.*

Events

Event One is a small but friendly one-day convention being held on Sunday November 29th at the Village Hotel Complex, Captain Clarke Road, off Dukinfield Road, Hyde, Manchester. Running from 10am to 5pm, and costing a mere £2.50, it offers scratch-built props, video showings, competitions and talks. It's being organised by the Grand Order of Time Lords and Hyde Fundraisers, but I'm sure that anyone who wants to turn up will be made more than welcome. Further details from David Metcalfe, 173 Coalshaw Road, Chadderton, Oldham OL9 8JS.

Media Arts is staging a screening of THE PRISONER at the Town Hall Studios in Swindon on December 3rd, with a guest speaker to be announced. Call the box office on (0793) 611181 for details.

No matter what part of the country you live in, you shouldn't be short of a convention or two next year, with the following lining up:

20-21 March, sees **Helix 93**, a DOCTOR WHO convention in aid of Children in Need, at the Royal National Hotel, Russell Square, London. Adults £30, children £20 for two-days, other rates, including family, on request. For details send an SAE to: Helix 93, 48 Lensbury Way, Thamesmead, London SE2 9SZ.

Action 93 is a weekend of celebration of ITC entertainment to be held at Shepperton Moat House over the weekend of 26-27 March 1993. For more details send an SAE to: Claire Saunders, 12 Saville Crescent, Ashford, Middlesex TW15 1SX.

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MAGAZINE
FREE DOCTOR WHO POSTCARDS
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RESURRECTION of the DALEKS
Plus — Historical Doctor Who: Educational or Pastiche?

Nebula 93 is another weekend of all matters WHO from those MLG people, to be held at the Crest Hotel in Liverpool City Centre over Easter Weekend 1993 — April 10th and 11th. No confirmed guests yet, but they are taking advance bookings, which currently stand at £27 for the two days if you book before December 31st. Child and family concessions are available, and for further details see last month's *DWB* or send an SAE to: MLG Promotions, 48 Western Avenue, Speke, Liverpool L24 3UR.

There's then an almost-decent interval of six weeks before the next convention, **Blue Box** — The Ride on Time Con. At the Forte Posthouse, Bournemouth on 22nd-23rd May, it is being held in aid of the Foundation for the Study of Infant Deaths. Guests are hoped to include Debbie and Jack Watling and Honor Blackman, and the whole affair sounds like a lot of fun. Details available via SAE from: TJ Edwards, 5 Pascoe Close, Parkstone, Poole, Doret BH14 0NT.

A week later **Manopticon 2**, the long-awaited sequel to Manopticon 1, surfaces over next Spring Bank Holiday, Sunday 30th and Monday 31st May 1993, at the Picadilly Hotel, Manchester. The Manchester Society of Cult Television claim to have somthing of coup on their hands, with the first convention appearance of Anneke Wills. £25 for the weekend, if registered before 1993 — details from 22 Seven Acres Lane, Norden, Rochdale OL12 7RL.

Advance bookings are already being taken for Dominitemporal Services' catchily titled **The Official Doctor Who Convention for 1993**. Doesn't really have the same ring as Panopticon, does it? This event, co-hosted by BBC Enterprises and Marvel over the weekend of September 4th and 5th 1993 at the Novotel, Hammersmith, London, promises to be a biggie. It's £33.50 for two days: try sending an SAE to 1993 Event, PO Box 357, London SW19 8BT.

Finally, The Grand Order of Time Lords are planning **Remembrance 93**, a celebration of the Doctor's 30th anniversary on the weekend of 27th-28th November 1993. Like this year's Event One, it will be held at the Village Hotel Complex, Hyde, Manchester, in aid of charity. Planning is obviously at a tentative stage at the moment, but for further details, or to register your interest, contact David and Sandra Metcalfe at 173 Coalshaw Road, Chadderton, Oldham OL9 8JS.

ISSUE 194 of Marvel's *Doctor Who Magazine* includes a *Resurrection of the Daleks* archive, a round-up of the year's merchandise, interviews with Peter Howell and John Ringham (Tlotoxl in *The Aztecs*) and a feature on historical stories. This year's winter special is based around Gallifrey, and will be out by December 10th.

Anderson animation

WITH SPACE POLICE still in the development stage, Gerry Anderson is embarking on another new production for television entitled GFI, which is planned for transmission in 1994.

This £3.5 million, 13-part saga will be the first animated series produced by Anderson, using a combination of traditionally drawn and computer-generated images, and is being made as a co-production with a Russian company, Gosh, at its St Petersburgh studios.

The series is set in a solar system run by the United Planets, of which G-Force Galactic is a special rapid response team led by scientist James Gee, an Oxford University graduate, to combat rising crime. The series will incorporate an environmental theme.

Trek compendium

TITAN is updating its *Star Trek Compendium* to include *Star Trek VI*. The new edition is out on February 18th, still costing £8.99

Captain Scarlet book

BOXTREE are following their STINGRAY book (reviewed next issue) with a CAPTAIN SCARLET guide, following the same format, to be published next year.

Smeggin' good

RED DWARF has been nominated for a comedy award at this month's International Emmy Awards ceremony. An Emmy is the American tv equivalent of an Oscar.

Dr Who script books

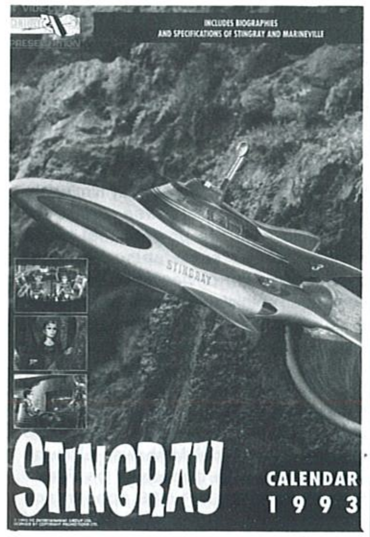
TITAN BOOKS have scheduled two of next year's DOCTOR WHO scriptbooks: *Power of the Daleks* is out on March 18th, with *Ghost Light* following on April 22nd. Now we might be able to understand exactly what was going on ...

Cyber-mum

ALEXANDRA TYNAN, known to DOCTOR WHO fans as costume designer Sandra Reid, was a recent contestant on the Australian version of SALE OF THE CENTURY. After a good start she finished with the lowest number of points! *DE*

Telefantasy calendars

ENGALE MARKETING have released three calendars for 1993 — THUNDERBIRDS and STINGRAY at £3.99 and THE PRISONER at £4.99, available from all the usual comic and record shop outlets.


INCLUDES BIOGRAPHIES AND SPECIFICATIONS OF STINGRAY AND MARINEVILLE
STINGRAY
CALENDAR 1993

Next Gen – DS9 link episode

THE NEXT GENERATION is filming a two-part story to air at the beginning of January as a tie-in to the start of DEEP SPACE NINE. It will apparently strive to make the Cardassians — the major protagonists of DS9 — more dastardly.

In *Chain of Command* Picard steps down from command of the Enterprise in furtherance of a secret mission into Cardassian space accompanied with Worf and Dr Crusher. Riker has his hands full with Ronnie Cox (of *Total Recall, Robocop* and *Beverly Hills Cop* among other things), who takes over Picard's command. Number One is soon screaming at the new captain and is barred from the bridge and busted in rank. Meanwhile Picard falls into Cardassian hands and gets a taste of the torture they have been handing out to the Bajorans for decades.

Picard's away team/commando squad sport all-new black combat outfits. The antagonism established here may set the stage for Picard's special interest in Bajoran independence which kicks off DEEP SPACE NINE. Although the Enterprise is at the space station at the beginning and again at the end of the 90-minute pilot episode, Picard is the only one of the regular NEXT GENERATION cast who will be seen — except, of course, for O'Brien and Keiko, who join the DEEP SPACE NINE cast with this story.

- Beginning in *Schisms*, Deanna Troi has a new, curlier hairstyle and will begin wearing something more like a blue medical officer uniform as time goes on — perhaps she is well on the way to the blue lab coat that served Gates McFadden so will if Marina Sirtis carries through her desire to have a child in the near future! Worf is also slated to get a new look this season — Captain Picard is the only one whose hairstyle seems safe ...

- In *Rascals*, the seventh episode of the season in which Picard and Guinan, among others, are turned into 12-year-olds while retaining their adult minds, young Jean-Luc is portrayed by the same young man who was Picard's nephew in *Family*. The high point of the story may come when little Picard must gain access to the bridge by convincing some Ferengi that Riker is his father.

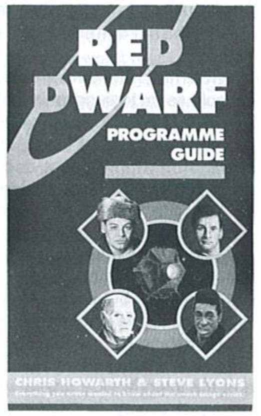
- It now appears likely that several of THE NEXT GENERATION cast will get some opportunities to reprise their roles in *Every Good Boy Deserves Favour*, directed by Patrick Stewart. Last winter's Los Angeles area performances were so popular that a national tour visiting cities with available orchestras on weekends while filming THE NEXT GENERATION is in development for the early spring. Dates in Minneapolis and Detroit appear the most solid at the moment.

- A new set of NEXT GENERATION action figures have been released to select toy stores, if you can find them. They're selling out as fast as stock comes in, and convention dealers are already asking huge mark-ups for the figures, which come with various accessories such as phasers and tricorders.

- Rumours are starting to circulate that Paramount has lost whatever interest it had in the idea of doing a *Star Trek VII* with the original series cast, and thoughts are turning towards incorporating the next generation into the film series. The first tentative discussion of film projects with the actors has begun, but nothing is likely to commence for at least two years.

- Save for *Relics*, featuring James Doohan as Scotty, response to THE NEXT GENERATION's sixth season has been less than enthusiastic from fans thus far. The scripts have been overloaded with pseudo-scientific jargon and lack of good material for the regular cast compared to the guest stars. The problems are being laid at the door of departures to DEEP SPACE NINE and time being needed for the large number of new writers finding their way. Jonathan Frakes has complained that the cast are getting their scripts only six or seven hours before shooting begins! However, there are hopes that with *Chain of Command* the reorganised staff will begin to get into their stride.

Kathleen Toth



For those who want more than just a picture book to accompany their RED DWARF, 18th March 1993 sees the publication of Virgin's *Red Dwarf Programme Guide.* Promoted as "the first and only guide to this hit phenomenon", which implies that Virgin aren't taking the *Official Red Dwarf Companion* all that seriously, it is written by Chris Howarth and Steve Lyons, names that will be familiar to readers of the *Red Dwarf Smegazine.* Boasting a cover by Alister Pearson, it will be a small-format paperback of 240 pages, with 8 pages of photographs, retailing at £4.99.

Highlander 3

HIGHLANDER 3: THE MAGICIAN, the proposed new movie, is set 300 years ago in Japan. Connor MacLeod and a Magician-like figure journey to a mystic mountain in search of a swordmaker who also has the power of illusion — a power also sought by an evil Kurgan-like immortal. A battle occurs and the magic mountain is destroyed. Many years later, an archeologist digs the preserved swordmaker out, and he goes looking for McLeod. Filimg on the project, under *Highlander* producer William Panzer, is set to begin at the end of the year.

Meanwhile, the HIGHLANDER tv series continues on American tv to a mixed response from SF tv fans.

Quantum Leap fifth season news

THE NEW SEASON of QUANTUM LEAP promises to be make-or-break for the series. Ratings so far, from the Lee Harvey Oswald opener and the Vietnam vet episode, have been very disappointing, but the appreciation figures and demographic spread of the audience still makes the show attractive to both the network and advertisers.

Adding to the series' troubles is the determination of the creative staff to try something different with the series concepts. Many of the forthcoming episodes promise revelations of an SF nature about just what's been happening to Sam Beckett. That at least shows that the series is developing and changing, but the proposed week-by-week 'dramatic' revelations have some dedicated 'Leapers' (QL fans) up in arms, as SF takes precedence over drama. The following episodes have recently been screened in America:

Killin' Time: Sam leaps into a killer holding a mother and child hostage. Unfortunately, that mean's the killer's in the waiting room ...

Star Light, Star Bright: (1966) Sam leaps into a 79-year-old man who insists he's seen UFOs. His family is understandably worried about this, especially when Sam insists he sees them too.

Deliver Us From Evil: (1966) The promised 'evil leaper' episode, about which it would be a crime to say more other than it's 'good stuff'. This is the episode which has many fans worried about the future of the series, seeing an upcoming conflict similar to the Doctor-Master battles of DOCTOR WHO on the horizon.

One Little Heart: (1955) *For Your Love:* (1966) *The Last Door:* (1978) Three interconnected stories set in the same small Louisiana town. Sam leaps into a different person in each episode, but the overall theme is a long-standing unsolved murder mystery. There's stuff in these that's touching, heart-breaking and romantic. This three-episode tale has been compared to certain elements of TWIN PEAKS.

Promised Land: The Christmas episode, in production now. When writer Tommy Thompson was asked about the rumour that Sam gets to go home for Christmas he just said, "Maybe, maybe not, you'll have to wait and see". Scott Bakula directs.

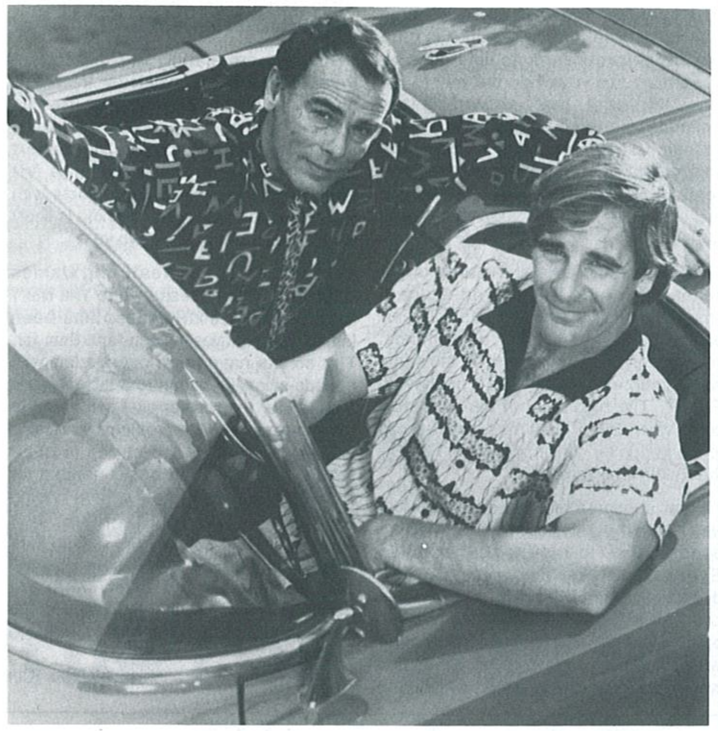
And finally, Tommy Thompson is writing an episode in which Sam's in London, and he thinks he just might be a vampire ...

Brian Robb

See over the page for a review of the season opener, The Kennedy Syndrome.

Quantum Leap

The Kennedy Syndrome



AFTER a cover up by the producers and much criticism by the fans, the season opener for QUANTUM LEAP has at last been aired. At first I thought this was going to be another 'this is what really happened to Kennedy' explanation. The bottom line is that it is not. In fact, the whole episode is very different from what we have come to associate with the programme.

A lot of ground was achieved during the fourth season, especially in the episodes *The Leap Back* and *A Leap for Lisa* (the closing episode to the season). The sight of the Waiting Room back at HQ in 1999, or the Control Room, is no longer something to marvel at, but an integral part of the scenario. Now we don't travel along with Sam, we also get to see what is going on behind the scenes with Al. It may have taken the best part of four years, but slowly the answers are being revealed. Like a jigsaw we are slowly putting all the pieces together and being given the whole picture.

So, you ask yourselves, what is so different about the two hour special? Well, in a lot of ways it is like a rollercoaster ride, with Sam leaping along at various points of Lee Harvey Oswald's life, and being thrown towards that dramatic historical moment.

The episode opens with Sam leaping into the body of Oswald on March 21st 1963. After only the briefest of moments here he leaps back in time to October 5th 1957. From here the scenario sets its slow, and at times, bewildering pace. We know who Sam is, what role he is going to play, but not what he can do to change history, if he can. Added to this is the fact that Sam is linked with Oswald, who keeps taking over his body when least suspected. This possession keeps getting stronger and stronger, up to the point where Al can no longer communicate with Sam. On top of this the scenario keeps changing, and leaping forward to Quantum HQ in 1999, where Al interrogates the real Lee Harvey Oswald, who is nothing less than terrified when he sees an image of himself as Sam.

If the episode set out to disclose any new facts on the Kennedy assassination then it fails miserably. The whole episode centres on Oswald completely and does nothing to prove or disprove the conspiracy. It does, however, present an image of Oswald as a crazed politically-lead individual who will do anything to achieve his aims.

The only real surprise comes in the final thirty seconds of the episode when it is revealed why Sam was there. To me it was a cop out, a way of justifying why I had been made to sit through two hours of this. The reason is a bit thought provoking, but not enough to spend time on it.

The whole episode is sandwiched between black and white photographs of Kennedy (post-opening credits) and Jackie Kennedy (pre-closing credits). These are there for dramatic effect and nothing else.

A closing trailer at the end of the episode promises that the series will leap from strength to strength, with such titbits as Sam leaping into the last day of Marilyn Monroe's life, spending time with Brooke Shields, encountering aliens, and meeting a demon from the future. Whether this will turn out to be a leap of strength, or failure, remains to be seen. (5)

Alex Delicedo-Rodriguez

The Impact Factor

Matthew Kilburn
St John's College, Oxford

Laudable though your interview with Eric Saward and Ian Levine may be *[DWB 106-7]*, in that it sheds a good deal more light on the situation that DOCTOR WHO found itself in after a few years of being produced by John Nathan-Turner — that is, of course, all but cancelled, with a production team on the verge of civil war and a star whose future was more in question than any of his predecessors — I wonder if you are going to ask the question that everybody seems to avoid.

If John Nathan-Turner was so obviously a destructive force with little real talent, why did his superiors at the BBC allow him to continue in a post that allowed him to damage the reputation of a series that was not only one of its largest earners, but also of historical importance as part of the BBC's tradition of public service broadcasting, a tradition increasingly under threat? Did Eric Saward do nothing? Or was John Nathan-Turner too popular with the BBC drama department for anything to be said against him?

You also haven't (yet) mentioned IMPACT. This successor serial to COMPACT was trailed by successive BBC drama heads from as early as 1982 or 1983 until around 1988, when the project was apparently dropped. John Nathan-Turner was reportedly producer-designate of this super-soap, supposedly Europe's answer to glossy series of the DALLAS/DYNASTY mould. It sounds just up his street. Perhaps JNT's guest star policy was partly motivated by his casting plans for IMPACT, slightly more respectable than Teynham's all-star pantomimes.

The notion that the above lines of thinking would seem to suggest is that the interests of DOCTOR WHO itself were low in the priorities of most of those at the BBC in the programme's last decade. While John Nathan-Turner was looking after IMPACT, the BBC were happy to employ him on a programme he wasn't really suited to, except in the field of its promotion. This is by no means an earth-shattering deduction, but it does raise the question of whether we want a new series of DOCTOR WHO to be made under the supervision of a management which has no idea of the integrity of a drama series, as seen by the way THE HOUSE OF ELLIOTT consistently mashes up good ideas (one can only assume CASUALTY succeeds by trial and error combined with a concentration of all the best contemporary drama talents). I certainly don't.

Michael Healy
Birkenhead, Merseyside

I suppose your exclusive interview with Ian Levine and Eric Saward was a minor coup. The most revealing facts were the extended versions of episodes and the way JNT fed the cancellation story to the tabloids. However, I feel some pruning was needed as Mr Levine comes across as petty and over-sensitive. I'm not blind to JNT's faults as a producer, but I feel that Ian Levine was desperately scrabbling around to criticise choices made by the producer. For instance, he says Tom Baker's season 18 costume was "a hideous caricature". No it wasn't. For me, the costume epitomised that season. It had a style and grace, was the same in silhouette but up close was clearly new. Just like season 18. *Colin* Baker's costume was certainly a hideous caricature that lacked depth. It was so shallow even Mickey Mouse would have turned his nose up at it.

Friction between people in the tv industry is nothing new. Remember the fallings-out between Tom Baker and Graham Williams — and working on STAR TREK isn't exactly a bed of roses either.

SOUR GRAPES

Theo Robertson
Rothesay, Isle of Bute

Having never been JNT's greatest fan I was looking forward to the Levine-Saward interview in issues 106-107 of *DWB*. However, having read the article leads me to beg a question — why?

I mean, after all, we (90% of fandom) know that JNT was the worst producer in the history of the show. We know that of the 50 stories he produced only about a dozen rose above sub-standard. We know that JNT stands for John No-Talent. So, why waste seven pages on something that amounts to sour grapes?

The worst aspect of the interview is that it says more about Ian Levine than John Nathan-Turner. One point is that incident in 1981 when Nathan-Turner told Levine to f— off! It makes one wonder why Ian didn't just knock JNT's head off and walk into the proverbial sunset. But hold on, the answer becomes obvious. It seems that nepotism and sycophancy goes a long way in the JNT production office. Would I be correct in saying that if Ian pandered enough to Nathan-Turner's ego then one day Levine would be made associate producer on DOCTOR WHO? It would certainly explain why Levine put up with so much humiliation from JNT.

Don't get me wrong. If JNT had left after *Androzani* then the show would probably still be on air today. JNT was the man who destroyed DOCTOR WHO, no one else. He still continues to destroy it with his video releases (I have written to BBC Enterprises to tell them of their mistake. Have you?). The sooner he is given his P-45 by the BBC the better.

DOCTOR WHO fandom does not need a 'guardian'. Each and every single fan is a guardian of the flame of fandom.

Jeff McDowell
University of Lancaster

Thank you for DWB 107, otherwise known as the Ian Levine Newsletter, or so it would appear after the recent run of issues!

So, Ian was the uncredited Script Advisor — let us kneel before him! He saved *The Daleks* from destruction — we should kiss his boots! *Attack of the Cybermen* was *his* idea — well, it's nice to know who we should blame. I always thought it was JNT who was interested in dragging up the show's (best forgotten) past.

Unfortunately, as a young fan, I never had the time, nor money, to buy film prints from the BBC, purchase props or fraternise with the powers-that-be to enable me to save episodes from destruction. Ian obviously did, and I'm sorry that he thinks that this elevates him to some sort of deity status, warranting adulation from other fans.

Let's face it, *The Daleks* wouldn't really have been missed by the general public if it had been destroyed. It's only use now is as a sad piece of 60s material to be laughed at on nostalgia shows. Likewise *Tomb* (the laughs it received on Frazer Hines' THIS IS YOUR LIFE appearance proved this). Also, if Ian so disapproved of JNT's ruining of the 'Golden Years', why did he participate in it? Surely he wasn't just pursuing his own interests?

If I were you Ian, I'd stick to producing dance records. A much better use of your time and money, and a way to achieve your sought-after acclaim from the *general public* — not just a sad bunch of anorak wearers.

ANIMATED WHO — THE CASE AGAINST

Mark Saunders
Godshill, Isle of Wight

In reply to Philip May and Alex Willcox's letters in *DWB 106* on the subject on a DOCTOR WHO animated series, I'd like to make the following comments.

Philip's statement about comics being able to appeal to adults if written well I wholeheartedly agree with. But the link between comics and animation is very tenuous. Comics, for a start, are infinitely less expensive to make well than animations are.

If you look at a history of animation (don't worry, I'll be brief!), you find that earlier animators, like Disney, put time and money into their creations in order to establish the medium as a viable alternative to live action. Later, once accepted, more and more animators appeared to compete for the same market. Inevitably, this has now resulted in speed and cheapness being the driving force for producers, instead of quality. Most animation is now created in Japan, because they can produce it faster and cheaper than anyone else. They do this, partly, by reducing the quality of the animation. Unlike "full" animation, as found in most major Disney projects, they use "limited" animation (ie. they minimise complex movements, take less time over backgrounds and character design, and more recently reduce the number of different frames per second — this stretches the quality to its absolute minimum, resulting in the effect of "jittery" movement. Watch the new He-Man cartoons for this effect).

My main point is that if the BBC commission a DOCTOR WHO animated series, it will be made as cheaply as possible. The BBC must get the maximum return for its outlay, especially in a recession, when the BBC itself is in the midst of an identity crisis. A quickly-made, limited animation series would sell well abroad, partly because the age-group it would be aimed at are too young to have developed adequate critical skills to see it as any better or worse than any other animated series.

A further issue is that the BBC would be unlikely to advocate both an animated series and another live-action series of DOCTOR WHO. It could, quite innocuously, kill off DOCTOR WHO as a programme for the teen/adult market, and establish it as a children's "cartoon".

For all these reasons, we really should not be encouraging the production of an animated DOCTOR WHO.

TENTH PLANET 4 SHOULD HALT 'SPECIAL' VIDEOS

Peter Mullerkey
Irlam, Manchester

You are probably confirming through these very pages that episode four of *The Tenth Planet* has been discovered.

No doubt BBC Video will do a similar successful early release, a la *Tomb of the Cybermen*. Surely the discovery of this episode will now halt the BBC's rather inept policy of DOCTOR WHO personalities providing links for missing episodes.

Whilst I agree this may be required in time, it is surely premature, when full stories from other Doctors exist and clearly there is no apparent haste for the likes of *Reign of Terror* and *The Invasion* abridged versions to be released when there is a possibility for the missing episodes to be recovered.

What a good year it has been for the discovery of previous-believed missing episodes. First the whole of *Tomb of the Cybermen*, and now *Tenth Planet* 4: after a desert of recovery, a positive oasis of episodes.

I fully agree with Darren Powis' suggestion *[DWB 107]* that the videos be released in a six-month cycle, thereby catering for each particular fan's favourite Doctor's era.

Adam Pierce
Hove, East Sussex

I must put my voice with so many others concerning the disappointment over so many video specials.

These 'specials' (although the word special for these videos is a contradiction in terms) are surely for limited (no offence intended) fan market, and the people who make up this market are showing such a strong disinterest that it seems madness to produce them. I can only hope that no one buys these 'cures for insomnia' (offence intended) out of curiosity.

I found the end of David May's letter *[DWB 105]* amusing, as I can imagine JNT reading it and thinking "what a good idea! A *Marco Polo* stills video, and I'll put a picture of *The Crusade* on the cover". Thinking about it, it doesn't seem so amusing after all.

David May
Upton, Wirral

The news in DWB 106 that Carole Ann Ford recorded her contribution to the 30th Anniversary Special at the same time as her Reign of Terror links appears to have confirmed my worst fears. The interviews should have been done in groups (eg. Carole, William Russell and Jacqueline Hill together; Frazer Hines, Debbie Watling and Wendy Padbury together, and so on), so that the actors can jog each other's memories and respond to what the others have said. However, it now looks like we're going to have more boring 'talking head' interviews resulting in us getting the same old stories we've heard so many times before. And since the Years Tapes so far have failed to dig up much in the way of old "SWAP SHOP interviews", I can't see this tape being any different — it'll just be full of clips from episodes which are already out on video.

Paul Dumont
Fareham, Hants.

Wouldn't it be great if the extended WHO releases stopped faffing about with dreary heard-it-all-before interviews and tried to recreate that delicious Saturday evening thrill of anticipation?

Let's have extracts from 70s editions of BASIL BRUSH and trailers for THE DUCHESS OF DUKE STREET. Track down the continuity announcers on duty on those Saturdays, dust off that BBC globe (the one with the stretch mirror behind it) and give the fans a complete nostalgic experience. I speak as one (surely not the only one) who found the continuity clips in SOUNDS OF THE SIXTIES sometimes more enjoyable than the Sounds themselves.

Think about it — which would you rather have? *The Davison Years* or Basil Brush's episodic shaggy fox stories? No contest.

UNNECESSARY LANGUAGE

Ricard Payne
Potters Bar, Herts.

I am writing with reference to your reply to Stephen Byrne's letter on swearing *[DWB 106]*. I am quite frankly disappointed with your response. *DWB* has always set itself up as being an intelligently written, thought-provoking and uncensored magazine. However, the term uncensored refers to being able to speak one's own mind on events or comments passed, not on using offensive language at any given opportunity. An intelligently written in-depth article or letter should not have to resort to the likes of language more often associated with lavatory grafitti. All great writers, whether they be in literature, plays or articles can achieve the desired effect of getting their views known by making the English language 'dance off' the page, not by resorting to 'clever' swear words.

DWB has in mind always reflected the above approach, but in more recent issues such as #105 , Ian Berriman says of the Cybermen in *Earthshock* that they can blow the s**t out of anything, or Peter Linford's review of *Love and War* where Robert Holmes was p****d off. This kind of language is not necessary in a magazine of the standard of *DWB*. It just shows that the writers have little understanding of the English Language and so have to resort to childish 'let's be clever and put a swearword in here' language that would suit Channel 4 down to the ground. As for Stephen Byrne's "a bit like when you have your first f—-" comment, well words fail me over such a stupid remark. I therefore hope *DWB* can return to its original high standards before it begins to lose some of its long-time supporters.

Jeremy Spencer
Macclesfield, Cheshire

I'm afraid that I have to disagree with any fan who should feel it necessary to use swear/rude words while writing about their views. These bits should be edited out because they don't belong in your quality magazine. This is one reason why I don't like the New Adventures books, as they pervert the originality of the show, and they are simply not DOCTOR WHO. I myself am not a prude, but quite frankly the use of those words are becoming too liberal.

BIGOT OF THE MONTH

TK Howe
No address given

I am writing concerning Stephen Byrne's letter in *DWB 106*. I find his language particularly offensive, and I'm sure I'm not the only one. Stephen, if you wish to use colourful language, do it somewhere else, preferably the Scottish highlands where nobody can hear your infantile language.

Secondly, I am concerned that your magazine is becoming a vessel through which homosexual and lesbian people are advocating "their way of life". I know sex is a bygone taboo subject matter, but the letter advertising (because that's what it was) a gay pub disgusts me totally. Please do not give into these pressure groups. *DWB* is a science-fiction/fantasy publication, by the Fan, for the Fan. It shouldn't contain sexually-orientated letters or articles — leave that to the 'Trash' magazines. Instead keep it clean and unique — after all there aren't many of them left …

How sad that certain people within a taunted minority, often derided for their inclination towards a 'weird' tv programme, should exercise such a similar intolerance and bigoted view towards another mocked minority — Gary.

Classifieds

Well established popular Doctor Who fanzine requires new writers to continue high standard of in-house publishing. Timelines — the finest tradition of A5 fanzines — Celebrate 30 years of Doctor Who in style. D. Metcalfe, 173 Coalshaw Green Road, Chadderton, Oldham, OL9 8JS.

'Top' — Doctor Who with attitude. A new fanzine out now, only £1.60 (inc p&p) from 8 Henley Road, Liverpool, L18 2DW. Cheques/POs payable to John Connors. Something really good.

Club Tropicana #1 — a new A5 Doctor Who zine! See the advert in DWB 107 for more details. A CT for the 90's? "Drinks are free and there's tons for *everyone*!" — George Michael. Only £1.50 (includes p&p). Cheques to John Pettigrew, 10 Milton Road, Windygates, Fife KY8 5DQ.

Hey, what's this? It's got a good beat! Rayphase Shift tapezine issue nine. The music of Doctor Who will never sound the same again … thankfully! C90, SAE and some car springs to: Nick Goodman, 7 Kent Road, West Harnham, Salisbury, Wiltshire SP2 9HN. Zing!

For sale — cult/sci-fi tv memorabilia! Doctor Who, Star Trek, Blake's 7, Space 1999 and others. Many rare items, all good condition. SAE for lists, details to: Cult-sale (DB), 33 Ramerick Gardens, Arlesey, Bedfordshire, SG15 6XZ.

For sale — most issues of Doctor Who Weekly/Monthly between 1-100. Also, Doctor Who fanzines from early 1980s (Shada, Frontier Worlds, Tardis, etc.). Plus Star Trek and ST-Next Gen trading cards (series 1) @ 60p per pack. Send SAE for list to: James Airey, 44A Barnsbury Road, Islington, London N1 0HD.

Large Doctor Who collection for sale. Send SAE for full list to: David Alston, Flat 5, 42 Buckingham Place, Brighton, BN1 3PJ.

Horizon, the Blake's 7 Appreciation Society. Fighting the Federation for 12 years and celebrating 15 years of the programme. Bigger and better than ever — join The Cause today! Send an SAE or 2 IRCs to: Ann Steele, 66 Sherwood Park Road, Sutton, Surrey SM1 2SG for further details.

The Katy Manning International Fan Club has just released its first newsletter which includes a reproduction of a specially-commissioned hand-written note from Katy, plus a report on her latest Australian convention appearance — by her 'minder'! To join the club send A$20 to: KMIFC c/- 2/298 Pacific Hwy Charlestown 2290. Australians should send A$15. This fee covers a membership pack which includes a signed Katy photo as well as 4 quarterly newsletters. Please make all cheques payable to M Corben. If you want to see what the club is about you can obtain a copy of the inaugural newsletter for two International Reply coupons (Australians please send two 45¢ stamps).

Chris Boucher

In the second part of a three-part interview the former Blake's 7 script-editor tells **Alan Stevens** and **Anthony Brown** how Terry Nation's space epic evolved, and reveals some behind-the-scenes secrets …

ALAN STEVENS: How far had BLAKE'S SEVEN been developed by the time you were appointed script-editor?

CHRIS BOUCHER: Terry Nation had by that time I think, written about six first draft scripts, but really the series was still in its design stage and so it was great fun to work on. I got on very well with the producer David Maloney, a very nice guy who always listened to my opinions and included me in everything. He even took me with him to see Dr Christopher Evans at the National Physical Laboratory, to see what he thought about our concepts in the series. He liked them all, except telepathy.

AS: The teleport was all right then?

Yes, that would happen in due course he reckoned — anyway it was in STAR TREK so what the hell. David was also able to get tickets to see the press preview of *Star Wars*, but he didn't take me, for which I wasn't highly chuffed I have to say. I think he took Terry though, and when they came back David said, "Well that's us finished, we can't possibly match that, we're dead." It seriously depressed him.

ANTHONY BROWN: I've heard that because of the work-load Terry Nation was under he was delivering first, maybe second-draft scripts and you were effectively writing the final draft.

Because Terry wrote a lot of action into his scripts they did tend to be a bit on the short side. I mean, he was an action writer of the old school if you like. He wrote casts of thousands and action, whereas we could only afford casts of several, and although we could talk about the action you didn't get to see a lot of it. At one stage Terry did say, "You can have second drafts or you can have the next episode, but you can't have both." So we settled for next episodes and I did the re-writes. Terry actually wrote tremendously quickly — I've known him to write a script in five days! He simply sort of roared through it, and I have to say when you write that fast it does from time to time show. But it was a hell of a work-load for him, thirteen 50-minute episodes already commissioned with a date for production and so forth, it was a hell of a strain. He could have said that he didn't want to do all thirteen I suppose, but he was no mug!

AS: Did you have any say in who should be cast?

David Maloney cast it but I went along to all the auditions, then we would go back to the bar afterwards, have a couple of pints and discuss it.

AS: Is it true that Ian McCulloch was at one stage considered for a part in BLAKE'S SEVEN?

Yes, but Terry wasn't very keen on the idea, I think they'd had some previous falling-out over another series he had created called SURVIVORS.

AB: Did you find Terry Nation at all protective towards BLAKE'S SEVEN, particularly once he'd moved on from writing it?

Terry wasn't really like that as far as I could see. He was going to America anyway, so I think he was cutting ties. He didn't seem hugely protective, but then he was a pro from way back. There isn't a lot of point with being hugely protective, what you've got to be protective of is your programme rights, and he and his agent were very good at that — nobody screwed Terry! On all the books and videos it's "Terry Nation's Blake's 7", but I'm sure he bled because we all do, but Terry bled in private.

AS: In what way did your approach differ to Terry's?

Terry had a much clearer notion of right and wrong than I did. He saw the series as basically Robin Hood in space, whereas I sort of warped it a bit and tried to make it more ambiguous, so that in the end it became more like Che Guevara and the Dirty Dozen.

AS: So you didn't see Blake as a hero figure then?

I saw Blake as an idealist who goes down the road that idealism, and fanaticism to an extent, takes people. Although he believed that he was working for a just cause and that his motives were purely altruistic, I can't see how Blake could possibly have avoided being brutalized to some extent by the kind of guerilla war that he was undertaking against the Federation. This was shown clearly, I think, when Blake was finally placed in a situation where he was forced to consider the outcome of his actions. To infer that the end justifies the means is, to my mind, assuredly wrong, because I don't think there is an end, there are only means, and means are corrupting.

AB: Of all the characters that appeared in BLAKE'S SEVEN did you have a favourite?

I liked the character of Avon instantly and I liked the way Paul Darrow played it. One of the particular things I liked about Paul was that he learned the lines and delivered them, he and Michael Keating [Vila] had that in common. They took the scripts, they learned them, they didn't paraphrase them and they didn't assume that they could do it better than the writers. When you get characters like that you write for them, it's more fun — there's no point in sweating over getting a line right if the actor then changes the line. In my case, I guess, it's probably because I started in comedy and as you know, if you change one word in a line or add a word you can lose it completely and it's no longer funny. Most of the others had a tendency, for whatever reason, to change lines. Very occasionally it was an improvement, in most cases it wasn't. Michael's timing was not so good, oddly enough, but he did get better as time went on. So basically, if you play it according to the script, you'll get more to do — it was as simple as that really.

AS: I noticed that you would often borrow lines from films like Casablanca and The Magnificent Seven.

That's right. Paul relished good Western lines and I used to quite deliberately lob then in. I watched *Trial* recently, which was one of my episodes, and there was a line in there which I had taken straight from *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*: "Stick to action Blake, that's what you're good at."

AB: Was Avon really as cynical as he made out, or do you think deep down he was an idealist like Blake?

Well I was always careful to make sure that Avon could have an idealistic reason for doing something, and also a totally selfish and cynical one, and you pays your money and you takes your choice. I don't think to my mind the character was really sure of his own motives anyway, I mean as far as Avon was concerned rationally, he always did it for totally cynical reasons. His ambition right from the start had been to get rich and then retire to a place in the sun, but finally, when it came to the last episode, Avon, either despite himself or because of what had happened to him, believed in Blake's friendship. No, I've sort of skirted round the word, he had come to believe in Blake's *love* for him, and Blake was the last possible thing he could believe in. Having lost everything that he had ever believed in, there was one last possibility for faith, for belief, for love, and when it became apparent to Avon that Blake had betrayed him, he killed him and Avon had absolutely no choice, but to kill him. The final irony, of course, was that he then realized he'd made a mistake, he was wrong, Blake hadn't betrayed him at all. Which was basically funny, and which was why, I guess, Avon smiles in the final frame.

AS: The last episode of BLAKE'S SEVEN certainly had an impact, and from the reaction it got, it's a wonder you weren't lynched.

Yeah, I know what you mean. My mother-in-law was talking to this electrician once, who had came to fix something in her house. Anyway they got chatting about television and suddenly she said, "Oh my son-in-law works for the BBC." And the electrician said, "Oh that's good, but mind you, I'd like to lay my hands on that bugger who killed everyone in BLAKE'S SEVEN." At which point she bit her tongue and decided not to tell him what it was I did at the BBC.

AB: Was the final episode, Blake, intended to end the series as a whole?

It was an ending in itself, but it wasn't necessarily the end of the programme. If BLAKE'S SEVEN had returned for a fifth series, then the episode would now be regarded as a cliff-hanger, following in the tradition previously laid down by Terry Nation.

AS: How, then, did Avon survive his last stand against all those Federation guards on Gauda Prime?

Well, don't forget you never actually saw him die did you? The freeze frame ending does leave open the possibility that he may have survived after all.

AS: So if there had been a series five, what form would it have taken? Surely after an encounter like that, Avon would have become a gibbering loon!

What I would have suggested, and what I would have tried to do, depending of course on Paul's reaction, would have been to make Avon over into a hero, and make over his personality as well, so that he would have become Blake. In effect recreating what he'd destroyed, and if you really wanted to play games with it, Avon would now actually be called Blake, for some specific reason or other.

AB: Perhaps you could have a situation where people just simply refused to believe that Blake was dead. I mean the Federation had lied before, why should anyone believe them now? Therefore the next time a Federation installation got blown up, the whisper would go around, "Blake did it."

Yeah, it's like Elvis Presley being alive and well and living on the moon, or as my kids say, "He's up in our bog!"

AS: One character who didn't appear in the final episode was Servalan, and when I spoke to Jacqueline Pearce recently I got the distinct impression that she had taken it personally.

Well it wasn't meant as a personal thing. As far as I was aware she'd had her number of contracted episodes and we were out of budget. There was no money left over for extra characters, I just had to work with whoever was at hand. As writer and as script-editor I'd have a list of people who were available for any particular episode, or were required to go into any particular episode, and I'd put them in, but if they'd been used up then that was it, I couldn't help them, and Jackie had been used up. End of story.

AB: So you got on okay with Jackie then?

Everything was fine as far as I was concerned. In fact I had a lot of time for Jackie, she had a wonderful sort of big camp attitude to everything. I remember she was once late for camera rehearsal and so drove up and parked her car outside the Television Centre, out the front where the Rollers used to pull up and everything. Anyway the next minute out came one of the Jobsworths and said to her, "You can't park that there. You can't park that there 'ere, missus." To which she replied "Nonsense, of course I can park it here, I'm a star. Without people like me there wouldn't be any programmes, don't talk rubbish man, and I'm late, so out of my way!" And she stomped past him, and then there were phone calls to the gallery, "She'll have to move the car!" I loved it, I thought she was great.

AS: How did you see the character of Servalan?

I never really saw her as possessing any great depth or detail somehow. I did, on a couple of occasions, try to undermine the clear lines of the character and introduce an element of ambiguity, as I had done with Blake, but really she was an archetype. She was Terry's villainness and he wrote her as a villainness, and as she went on she became more villainous and less villainous in a way.

AS: In what way exactly?

Well, Jackie relished the part and sometimes the relish was a little too apparent, I felt, for her to be truly horrific. There was something wholehearted about the way Jackie played it, which sort of undermined any really scummy and truly unpleasant edge the character had. So although she did terrible things, she did them with such a flourish that you never really got that feeling of internal corruption. What's that cliche about evil?

AB: The banality.

Yeah, the banality of evil, well she was too big to be banal.

AS: I don't know. Speaking personally, it was the fact she was so desensitized from her actions that made her all the more disturbing. She had this ability to do the most appalling things for no reason at all, and at the same time be completely relaxed and calm about it.

Yes, I see what you mean. I suppose there was something feline about her really, and actually now I'm thinking about it, something feline about the performance as well. I mean if you were going to look for an animal parallel, it would be a cat, and to basically say they're cruel is to misunderstand how they work. I mean, what they do is really an instinctive sharpening of their hunting prowess, and although the way they go about it is horrendous, you couldn't actually say a cat was cruel. To say something is cruel is to impute intent, whereas a cat has no intention to be cruel, it just is, in the same way as Servalan just was, and so in the performance perhaps you got that feeling of the feline cruelty. A sociopath, someone who was basically lacking a certain area of understanding or empathy.

AS: Servalan always struck me as someone who wasn't interested in the Federation and only saw it as a means of gaining personal power.

Well of course that's what it was. She and people like her, subvert organizations and ideas and movements, not because they have a different view of what they should be, but purely because they can. Servalan was just using the Federation to gratify her own selfish needs, and anyone who got in her way was ruthlessly purged.

AB: After Travis got himself shot to pieces in Star One, I take it there was never any thought of introducing another Federation regular for Servalan to team-up with.

Not really. The trouble with series is that the more regulars and semi-regulars you introduce the more of a strait-jacket you're working in. So to avoid

that situation we would instead just produce one-off characters for Servalan to inter-react with and explain the plotline to.

AB: Was there ever an attempt on behalf of the writers to develop a progressive, on-going relationship between Servalan and Avon, or among any of the regular characters for that matter?

No, and this was quite deliberate, because with a drama series it should be possible to show any of the episodes, apart from the first and the last, in any particular order. So really from that point of view it would be essential to try and keep the relationships between the regulars as simple as possible. Occasionally we would suggest that one or other of them would have romantic feelings towards a person outside of the group, but then that was convenient, because once the episode was over you never saw them again.

AS: Usually because Avon shot them ,didn't he?

Yes.

AS: That's a bit disturbing really isn't it?

Well it doesn't say much for his love life!

AS: Both Jackie Pearce and Paul Darrow have stated in the past that, on occasion, they did try themselves to infer a relationship between their two characters.

That's true, they did used to do that. I remember it happened once to one of my episodes, *Rumours of Death*, where they fed in a relationship that was never intended, by interpreting lines in a particular manner, but that still doesn't mean there was a relationship there.

AS: But in your story Death-Watch ...

Yes, I know they did kiss, but thinking about it, that must have been another they snuck in. Anyway you could always take that as Avon doing a Burt Lancaster, one of Paul's heroes, and just being macho and dominating towards a female.

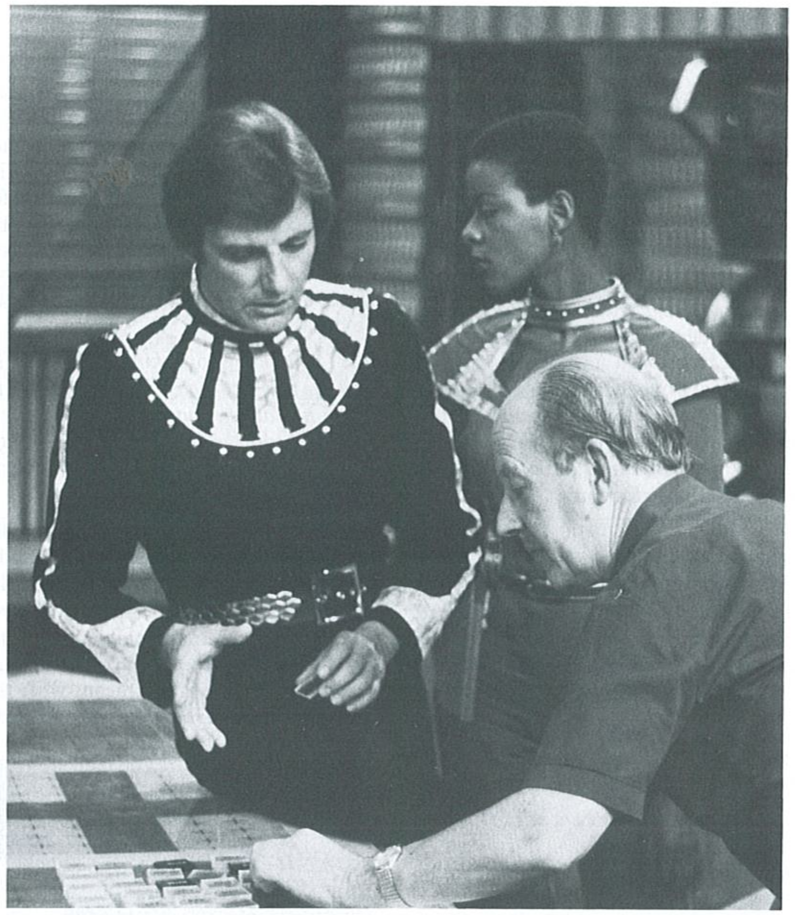
AB: Were the actors given any say in the way the series progressed?

Although they always got the scripts in time to learn them and do them, they were rarely, if ever, consulted about the development of the overall line of the series or about any particular episode. There were a couple of occasions when I did scripts for certain actors because I felt that they hadn't been given much to do, but that wasn't done in consultation. I didn't get in a little huddle with these people and say, "Who feels they haven't done enough recently?", because as far as I'm concerned, and I'm sorry if it sounds arrogant, but I don't think it's got anything to do with the actors quite honestly.

AS: How much contact did you have with the cast on a personal level?

Not a great deal really. We would gather together at the end of the recording for a drink and that sort of thing, but I would always steer well clear of any intrigue that was going on; simply because I don't like all that incestuous gossip and back-biting that develops over a period of time with any given group of people. I mean if you think about it, soaps must be horrendous to work on. So quite honestly I didn't get to know any of them particularly well, and to me they were basically just the people they played. This of course went with my natural inclination anyway, because as I've said before, I don't make friends very easily and I'm not all that comfortable with social chit-chat.

AB: Apparently Paul Darrow wrote a script, Man of Iron, for series four. How did that come about?



Above: Vere Lorrimer directs a scene from the fourth season

I don't know. I never saw the script or knew anything about it until it was mentioned to me recently. It certainly never came across my desk at the time and it definitely wasn't commissioned by me. So why it was written and who it went to I have no idea, but as far as I was concerned it had nothing to do with the official scripting of BLAKE'S SEVEN.

AB: Why did you only write two episodes for series four?

Because that was all that I was allowed to write. The writers guild at that time were pressurizing the BBC in an attempt to stop script-editors writing for programmes, and so consequently I was told that I would only be allowed to write two episodes for the new series. The decision to write the first and last came from a piece of advice Terry Nation gave me in the bar once, when he said, "To make sure you get your repeat fees when writing for a series, always write the first and last episode, because then, even if they only re-show part of a series, they'll still have to repeat yours."

AS: Do you think Vere Lorrimer was the best choice to replace David Maloney as producer on series four?

I have yet to meet anybody who doesn't like Vere and I like him very much indeed. He's a sweet man, and by his own admission he was at a loss on a couple of occasions with regard to certain scripts. We had a long discussion one time, where I tried to explain a particular plot point to him and I tried to explain it four different ways, four different times and he still hadn't grasped it. Then eventually I discovered he was talking about a completely different script, but really, if people fault series four, and they do, I don't think you can fault it from Vere's point of view. I think you probably can fault the scripts, but as I've said to people on previous occasions, series four wasn't series four — it was series one Mk 2. It was the first series of a new set-up and so really I think it's sort of unfair to judge on that basis.

AB: I thought that the second half of series four seemed to work a lot better then the first half.

The problem was that we had the go-ahead on series four very late in the day, and so we were in a God-awful rush to get enough scripts together, to select the directors and then get the first film block rolling. After you've done that you've got a bit more time to think, so that, I suspect, is why the second half feels better and works better than the first, simply because we had more time.

AS: BLAKE'S SEVEN ended with the Federation still very much in control. Do you think Blake ever stood a chance of winning?

No, I don't think it was possible. Although on occasion it was suggested that there were other freedom fighters about the place, they were never of any real threat to the Federation. So really when you came down to it, there was only Blake and his four companions, fighting alone and against overwhelming odds.

AS: The Federation was here to stay then?

No, I doubt the Federation would have lasted forever. It's a fact that most empires seem to develop a life of their own, they grow for particular reasons, they carry on growing, they cease to grow, they collapse in on themselves, they're replaced by something else. The question is, does an empire collapse because of the outside forces ranged against it, or do the outside forces arise because the empire is self-destructing?

Next issue: In the final part of this interview, Chris Boucher discusses his involvement with Star Cops.

A space adventure series of the future

ON SEPTEMBER 15th 1977 David Maloney, BLAKE'S SEVEN producer, published a four and a half page document entitled 'Blake's Seven: A Space Adventure of the Future by Terry Nation'. This slim volume, aimed at the press, outlined the plots for the first eight parts of series one in varying detail, preceded by the following introduction:

> *It is set in the third century of the second calendar. Space travel is routine and many planets in the Sun Galaxy and beyond have been colonised. The planets are politically and economically linked in a Federation. Their peoples are ruled from Earth by a ruthless totalitarian regime.*

The Way Back, Space Fall, Cygnus Alpha, Time Squad and *Duel* all receive a similarly detailed amount of coverage, while *The Web, Seek-Locate-Destroy* and *Mission to Destiny* are dealt with in a far more perfunctory fashion — the last of the three receives a mere six lines.

The plot synopses all conform to the transmitted versions, but their emphasis highlight elements in such a way as to enable uninformed journalists to understand what are often intrinsic science fiction ingredients. For instance, 'teleport' is explained as a dematerialisation/materialisation transmitter, Zen is described as 'the talking computer' and Travis's crew of 'Cyborgs' are explained as tireless androids.

What may come as more of a surprise is the lack of detail about the main protagonists. Nothing at all is said about Roj Blake, while Jenna Stannis is fleetingly described as 'a space pilot and smuggler'. Vila Restal is 'a highly accomplished and likeable thief', Kerr Avon 'a computer expert guilty of embezzling', Cally 'is telepathic [and] incredibly beautiful', and Gan, we are told, 'has a "limiter" implanted in his brain that stops him being able to kill'. Nothing apart from their names is given about Supreme Commander Shervalan [sic] or Space Commander Travis. However, what is interesting is that at their first mention all the regular cast of characters have their names typed in underlined upper case, with the exception of Shervalan. This would suggest that she was not at that time seen as one of the major players, despite the obviously pivotal role she obtained later.

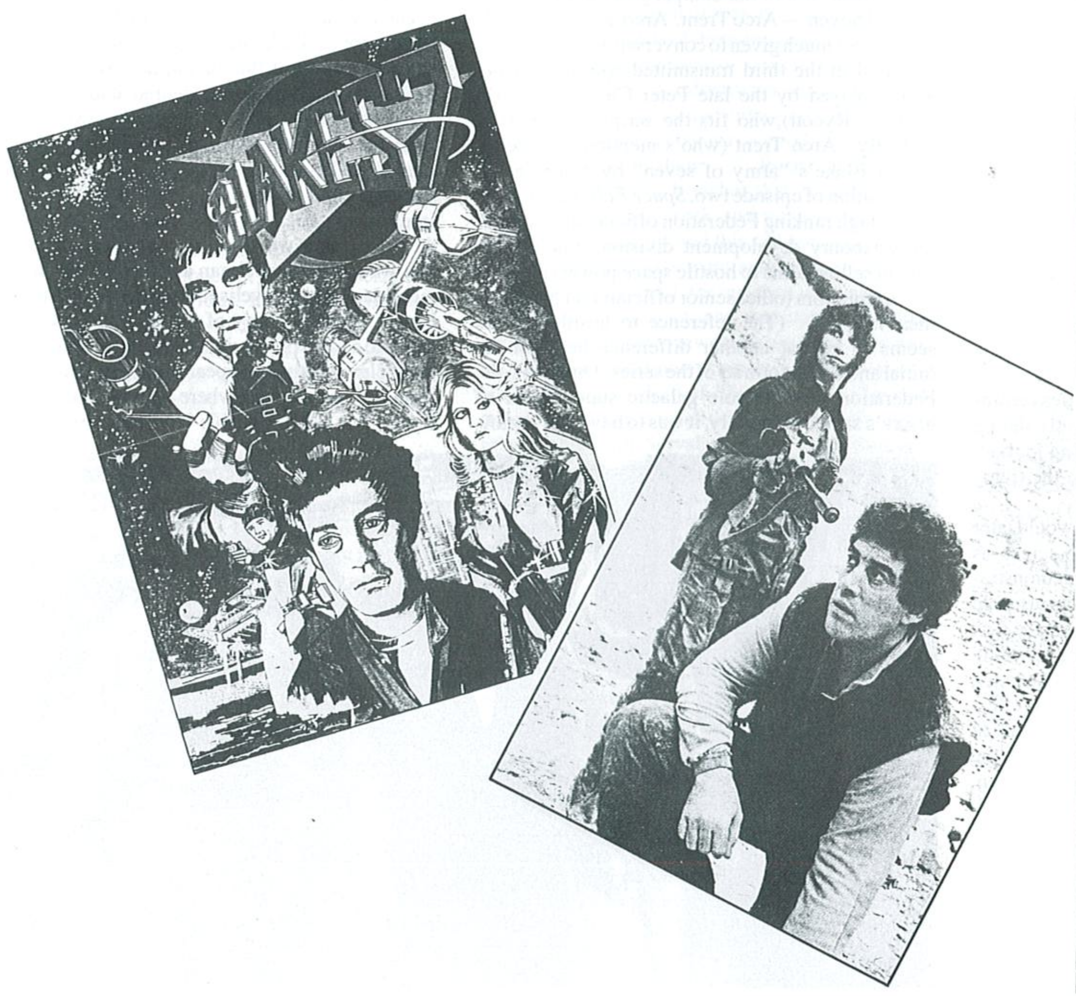
Accompanying the breakdown of plotlines was a three-page list of credit details. These included writers, actors, directors and the producer David Maloney. Terry Nation is credited as 'Series Creator and Writer' and various examples of his previous work are listed. However, while SURVIVORS, THE SAINT and THE AVENGERS are all sketched out in a few words, no mention is made of Nation's hand in DOCTOR WHO or the Daleks — a bizarre oversight considering that BLAKE'S SEVEN is in many ways the natural successor to that body of writing. This becomes an even more puzzling omission when QUATERMASS AND THE PIT, SPACE: 1999, DOCTOR WHO and DOOMWATCH are all mentioned elsewhere in the document where appropriate for the actors.

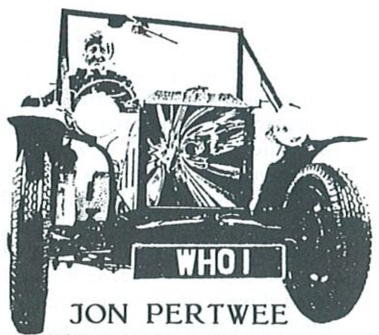
Douglas Camfield, despite a huge body of highly regarded work, gets only his ITV employment mentioned. Pennant Roberts fairs even worse with only SURVIVORS given under his entry. Vere Lorrimer and Michael E Briant are described as 'veteran' and 'considerably experienced' by turn, and David Maloney has his history as a producer and director mentioned. However, the information for the behind-the-scenes names appears to be almost secondary to that given for the actors who all have a far more detailed biography provided.

Each of the actors playing one of the good guys is provided with a list of some of their more prestigious or high-profile acting roles. These start with theatre and then proceed to tv and film. The longest entries belong to Gareth Thomas and Sally Knyvette who we learn both have a good grounding in Shakespeare and the classics — a fact not totally apparent from some of Knyvette's more idiosyncratic performances.

As an insight into how the BBC wanted to promote BLAKE'S SEVEN, the plotlines and production credits make for interesting reading. Their aim was obviously to prime journalists with sufficient information for them to preview the series for a general readership, although they rarely impart any feeling of excitement about what was coming.

Anthony Clark





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Blake's 9?

With the help of Chris Boucher, **Anthony Brown** takes a look at the scripting of Blake's 7, and considers the episodes, and characters, that were never to reach the screen ...

IN TONY ATTWOOD'S 1982 *Blake's Seven Programme Guide*, Terry Nation describes an uninspiring meeting with BBC executives. Several ideas had been discussed and rejected, and the meeting was drawing to a close when Nation had a flash of inspiration — or desperation. He began to describe a science fiction series, set in the third century of the second calendar. "A group of criminals are being transported to a prison planet, when, under the leadership of a wrongly convicted patriot, they escape and get hold of a super spacecraft, and begin to wage war against the evil forces of the Federation." Nation left the meeting with a pilot script commissioned on the strength of a title he'd coined on the spur of the moment, and which was to cause more than a few headaches over the next few years — BLAKE'S SEVEN!

What's surprising is the date of this meeting. The first episode of BLAKE'S SEVEN was transmitted in the last week of 1977, and recorded less than two months before. The first script was commissioned (with the project number 02255/0616) on the 11th September 1975 ...

Production of the first season of Nation's post-holocaust drama SURVIVORS had been completed some three months earlier, and plans laid for a second run. But both Nation and the series' star, Carolyn Seymour, had decided to move on following disagreements with the show's producer, Terence Dudley, and Nation's meeting with the BBC execs was probably prompted by this departure. The proposed space adventure was perhaps viewed as a potential replacement for SURVIVORS should that series end after its second season, though it was actually to continue for another year before Dudley's tentative plans for a fourth season (which quite possibly spawned TRIANGLE, as costings for the use of a North Sea ferry had already been made — what a legacy!) were aborted in the planning stages ... (Although it's often been claimed that BLAKE'S SEVEN replaced Z CARS, that series did in fact continue for a year following BLAKE'S debut).

In the meantime development of the series continued. A copy of the pilot script apparently dating from this period survives, and is interesting for both its similarities, and its differences, from the transmitted episode.

The script, entitled 'Cygnus Alpha' (it would later become 'Prologue', before reaching the screen as *The Way Back*) provides an interesting demonstration of Terry Nation's ability to turn out useable scripts almost at first draft. It may even be the first draft, as alterations were clearly being made within scenes, as it was typed — a reference to two men being present in a room has been altered to reflect Nation's decision, a few lines later, to make one of these characters female. Nonetheless, 95% of the dialogue survives intact in the transmitted version, and every transmitted scene is present in the script.

Most differences are minor, though interesting. Some relate to casting: Alta Morag, the representative of the justice department who prosecutes Blake, is described in this draft as a "very attractive and feminine thirty year old"; by the later version on which Trevor Hoyle based his novelisation, she'd become "young, and attractive, but rather cold"; on screen, she strongly resembles a Soviet shotputter, and is distinctly middle-aged. Bran Foster, although white-haired, is only forty here. Other differences relate to technology — this Federation depends on valve computers, connected to teletypes and punch card readers, and on rockets. But generally, the transmitted version is very faithful to the draft script, even adopting a number of directional flourishes suggested in the stage directions (such as the flashbacks to Blake's interrogation, and the silhouetting of figures against the glowing domed city), though Nation's intriguing suggestion that the central massacre be "played with light and sound", from Blake's point of view outside the cave, was ignored…

The most significant differences relate to the regular characters. Vila Restal is described as "thirty five, good looking and athletic. He appears to find everything slightly amusing." He doesn't steal Blake's watch in his first scene, however, and Jenna doesn't therefore have to tell him to return it — indeed, she doesn't appear until much later in the episode, and Vila has some of her best lines as a result…

When Jenna Stannis, "a stunningly beautiful girl in her late twenties, very poised and sophisticated" does appear, it's in the company of another of the planned Seven — Arco Trent. Arco, a "small brooding man not much given to conversation", eventually appeared in the third transmitted episode *Cygnus Alpha*, played by the late Peter Childs (MINDER's Sergeant Rycott),who fits the script's description perfectly. Arco Trent (who's mentioned as being one of Blake's "army of seven" by Avon in the novelisation of episode two, *Space Fall*) was to have been a high ranking Federation official, in charge of the weaponry development division, who'd been caught selling arms to hostile space powers after his co-conspirators (other senior officials) set him up as their fall guy. (The reference to hostile powers seems to hint at another difference between the initial and actual formats of the series. On screen, the Federation was the sole galactic super-power of BLAKE'S SEVEN — initially, it was to have had significant enemies… To judge by his position (third, after Vila and Jenna) in a listing of the Seven attached to the script's cover, Arco was to have been one of the more prominent regular characters (and might perhaps have been Blake's principal antagonist within the crew, given his background) but, as things turned out, he was last seen crawling towards a teleport bracelet late on in *Cygnus Alpha* dying from a stomach wound, and his influential connections became, at least in fan eyes, attached to Avon instead…

Two more of the Seven appear in the episode's final scene. Olag Gan, "a powerfully built and morose young man" (who doesn't get any lines, though he's listed as a speaking role), is seated next to Blake on the prison ship; on Blake's other side is Kerr Avon, "in his mid thirties, he is intelligent looking and rather serious", who has the lines delivered in the final version by a guard — "Take a long look… It's the last you'll ever see of it." He also demonstrates a Spock-like tendency to give overly precise estimates when Blake asks him how long they have until take off…

Another character seen later on in the series was originally to have been introduced in the pilot episode. The illegal political meeting massacred by Federation forces was to have been infiltrated not by Dal Tarrant, but by Cral Travis. No mention is made in the script of Travis' disfigurement (indeed, he isn't described at all, and Nation notes instead that Blake gives a "brief description of the actor playing Cral Travis", who, as he's not the distinctive albino portrayed in *The Way Back* by Jeremy Wilkin, is continually identified by reference to his "distinctive footwear". Michael Briant presumably deleted this, remembering Taren Capel's stripy trousers in *The Robots of Death*), and the role was probably renamed when the decision was made to give Travis an eyepatch and artificial arm in *Seek-Locate-Destroy* — Blake would have had no opportunity to maim him in the pilot script, where the events of the massacre are exactly as shown in *The Way Back*…

The regular cast of the series differs here in one more respect, Blake was not, initially, to have been counted as one of the Seven, nor was Zen, while Cally was never to have appeared at all…

The other two members of the Seven were to have been male convicts, who appear only as extras in the pilot script but had slightly larger roles in the second episode, commissioned on the 4th of June 1976 (presumably because BBC execs had realised that the first episode was likely to be atypical of the series as a whole). Tone Selman and Brell Klein are both mentioned in the novelisation of *Space Fall* as being part of Blake's "army of seven" (on screen Avon refers to a force of five, including the ill-fated Nova), and Selman actually appears in the transmitted version of *Cygnus Alpha* where he is played by David Ryall (SHELLEY's irascible landlord, also seen as a murderous driving instructor in a recently repeated episode of INSPECTOR MORSE). He seems a slightly anxious type whose characteristics were perhaps absorbed by Vila, and is killed in the final fight. Klein was never to reach the screen, but appears as a minor character in the *Cygnus Alpha* novelisation, where he delivers lines eventually split between Gan and Arco.

An early publicity shot of Gareth Thomas as Blake ©BBC

Another five scripts were commissioned in November 1976 as the series got the full go-ahead. The first of these will have been *Cygnus Alpha* which, as has been noted above, featured the full Seven as well as Blake and, presumably, Zen, Chris Boucher joined the series as script editor soon afterwards, having completed his work on the DOCTOR WHO story *Image of the Fendahl*.

"Bob [Holmes] was asked by David [Maloney], who he'd worked with on DOCTOR WHO, to be script editor, but Bob said that he didn't really want to do any more script editing, and suggested me. There'd been one stage before when Bob had wanted me to do some rewrites on other scripts as a way of learning the job of script editing (and picking up a few extra quid as well), so he suggested me to David, and I went along and met him, and we got on OK.

"I think Terry had done six first draft scripts by then, and I read three or four. It was still in the early design stages, so we went to see the guy at the National Physical laboratory, Chris Evans, who liked all the concepts except telepathy, for which he couldn't come up with any sort of model or justification."

Chris Boucher's recollections provide some insight into the departure of the extra members of the Seven. That Dr Christopher Evans (who'd previously been scientific adviser on the first season of THE TOMORROW PEOPLE, and who was to die not long after he wrote the *Radio Times* article previewing BLAKE'S SEVEN) objected to telepathy shows that Cally had been added to the series' format before the drafts of the first half dozen episodes were completed. But all nine members of the original Seven (counting Blake and Zen) are present in the script for *Cygnus Alpha*, and it seems likely that they originally appeared in episode four as well. The commissioned fourth episode was eventually written off, to be replaced by Cally's introductory episode, *Time Squad*, whose skimpy and underdeveloped plot suggests that it was written much later on in the season, at the same time as *Breakdown* and *Bounty*. The content of the abandoned episode isn't known, but it's reasonable to suppose that it foregrounded Klein, who hadn't received much of a role in the first three scripts…

We may however have seen this episode anyway, as Chris Boucher recalls … "Terry didn't waste anything — if a script was dropped as not being right, he would take it away and rework it, and make it work, and then you would get it back." The abandoned episode four almost certainly resurfaced later on in the season, reformatted for the new crew…

To judge by another of Chris Boucher's recollections, Terry Nation may well have realised the impracticality of the original Seven midway through writing a script. "I remember on one occasion the name of a character changed, or was replaced by another character — I think he was replaced by Vila, and Terry said to us, 'And for the rest of this script he's referred to as something or other, and for the rest as so and so, and you can alter it for me can't you?'" The character in question was probably Arco, who may well have survived rather longer than Selman and Klein, remaining a part of the Seven for a while after Cally's creation until he was finally displaced by Zen.

Seven episodes had now been delivered, including Terry Nation's personal favourite from the first season, *Mission to Destiny*. On the 21st April, 1977, three more were commissioned, followed a day later by episode eleven, and, on the 27th April, by another five, making a grand total of sixteen! As far as Chris Boucher knows, there were never any plans to extend the series' run beyond the planned thirteen episodes, and pressure of work was now such that scripts had to be used in the order they arrived (though episode thirteen was commissioned before episode twelve, suggesting that some plans were laid for the season's end sometime in advance), so the extra scripts weren't intended to offer a choice of episodes. They were perhaps intended to lay groundwork for a potential second season, and as such they were to prove very useful.

Pressure of work was having certain other effects by now… "At one stage Terry did say, 'You can have second drafts, or you can have next episodes, but you can't have both.' So we settled for next episodes, and I did the rewrites. Terry's scripts tended to be a bit short from our point of view because Terry wrote action, he wrote casts of thousands and a lot of action and we could afford casts of several, and we could talk about the action. Mostly my work was adding extra dialogue — dialogue enhancement — there's a good phrase, but Terry was a good storyliner and the twists were all there …" Robert Holmes had once commented to Boucher that "storylining involves most of the work and none of the fun of writing", so he didn't find this task too onerous, and the resulting episodes were among the best of the first season. *Duel* had, for instance, originally been written for a single set, and was considerably expanded by Boucher (viewers trying to spot the joins should remember Boucher's taste for film quotes…), while in Nation's draft of *Pressure Point*, Kasabi is a man who dies as a result of Travis' brutality — her relationship with Servalan having been expanded during rewrites. Terry Nation did nonetheless retain full control over the series. As Chris Boucher recalls, "In the first season we didn't discuss storylines — Terry sent us scripts, that was it."

Later episodes do however suggest that even this system may have begun to break down through lack of time. Both *Breakdown* and *Bounty* contain long action and 'creeping around corridors' sequences (which would probably work well in a filmed series, where the director has more techniques with which to create suspense, but which fall flat on video), as if Nation's first draft had gone through largely unchanged. It's probably as well that the series' run wasn't extended …

Planning for the second season began in the spring of 1978, with three Terry Nation scripts already on the shelf. *Redemption,* the first episode produced for season two, was always intended to follow on from *Orac*, but it seems likely that *Countdown* was originally to have preceded *Pressure Point*, with Provine providing Blake with details of Control, not Star One's location. Project numbers, script numbers and commissioning dates for the rest of the second season are confusing, as their orders do not always tally, but the first script known to have been commissioned was never to reach the screen.

Cally and Jenna, from *Seek-Locate-Destroy* ©BBC

During the mid seventies, David Maloney had directed a number of Z CARS episodes, including *Pursuit* (21/10/74), written by Allan Prior, and *Fairground* (15/3/76), written by Pip and Jane Baker. (It's unfortunate really, that he never worked with another Z CARS staffer — PJ Hammond.) Instead, the Bakers, who'd recently written for the second season of SPACE 1999 contacted him with a view to writing for BLAKE'S SEVEN.

"They turned up and wrote this story called 'Death Squad'. David was in an awkward situation really because he knew them, and Jane particularly is a very forceful personality. So he took total responsibility for commissioning them. I had no objections to it at all, but felt that because they were old associates of his, he had to take the responsibility, he didn't think that it would be fair for me to take it. They did the script, and I didn't think it was that bad, to be honest, but he hated it (well, maybe that's a bit strong but …). When he got the script and disliked it, he said I'll tell them, I'll deal with it, I'll take responsibility… David dealt with Pip and Jane, who I have to say I thought were quite charming people. They were very nice, I enjoyed meeting them, but I suppose looking back that it was the wrong sort of style for the series. It didn't work."

'Death Squad' was commissioned on 6th March 1978 as the fifth script of the season, and would have included Gan. A very hard edged and violent script, it concerned the use of experimental drugs to create a breed of hardened, programmed killers. Part of the problem with it may have lain in Pip and Jane Baker's view of the Seven's moral attitudes, as one of the Seven apparently masquerades as one of the Death Squad, killing several people without compunction in order to maintain their cover, Such behaviour would have been somewhat out of keeping with the moral, if criminal, characters already established.

Two more scripts, Roger Parkes' *Voice from the Past* (Project Number 02247/0400) and Robert Holmes' *Killer* (PN 02247/0401) were commissioned soon afterwards, on 3rd and 7th April. *Killer*, oddly enough, was the second episode recorded for the season (on 19th-20th August 1978), which suggests that an early script, intended to feature Gan, was postponed and *Killer* brought forward. *Voice from the Past* is the obvious candidate as Travis' involvement would have made far more sense had the episode taken place before *Pressure Point*. Gan's

TERRAIN MODE
TRK
427
CAT 3
K.P
U.S.A
DEC 92
AB-666
DIST 94
TIME 664
WAY 3
SPD
20
18
16
14
12
10
AS.SB
30
30
CLIMB
DSENT
BANK
Wallbank
dwb

part in *Horizon* may well have been added in so that (along with *Shadow*) it could become the last of his episodes to be shot.

Exactly when the rest of the season had been commissioned is unknown, but, if project numbers can be trusted, then the next episodes to be commissioned (in June) were three scripts from Terry Nation, which were meant to form the bulk of the season's conclusion (episodes B10, 12 and 13, PNs 02247/0403-0404). If David Maloney is to be believed, the idea of using the Daleks in the final episode was considered for a few seconds at least, but a few weeks later all three scripts were written off anyway, leaving the left over first series episodes as Terry Nation's sole contribution to the second season, "He dropped out at the last minute, said he couldn't do it, I can't remember why, I think he had another job on." Instead, Chris Boucher wrote a concluding instalment, along the lines already discussed with Nation (though it is, disappointingly, pure coincidence that *Star One* forms a perfect sequel to the STAR TREK episode *By Any Other Name*), and Robert Holmes was commissioned for a replacement tenth episode (PN 02247/0405) on 3rd August, not long before recording of the second season began. *The Keeper* is believed to have been the third replacement episode, and the slight discrepancies between it and *Gambit* (regarding, for instance, Travis' artificial arm which is still disabled at the end of *Gambit*) may have resulted from the decision to record and screen *Gambit* as episode eleven. They were perhaps originally to have been explained in episode eleven, which wasn't necessarily the somewhat delayed *Voice from the Past*, though there's no evidence that any other script was commissioned.

Work on the third season began in February 1979 when *Aftermath* (episode C1) was commissioned from Terry Nation, It was another two months, however, before Nation was formally commissioned for C2, *Powerplay* (which was to be the first episode recorded) on 30th April 1979. By then, a number of other scripts had been commissioned, including Roger Parkes' *Children of Auron* (PN 02249/0532, commissioned 10th April, and recorded fifth, in October 1979), and one from Robert Holmes (PN 02249/0534, commissioned 12th April), which was later to be written off, though Chris Boucher doesn't remember ever abandoning a Robert Holmes script.

Also written off was a script by John Fletcher, who was later to write for Boucher on BERGERAC. Fletcher should have been ideally suited to write for BLAKE'S SEVEN — his recent version of ROBIN HOOD for Radio Four was excellent, while his BERGERAC scripts (principally *A Man of Sorrows* and *Avenge O Lord*) are concerned with corrupt establishment and the effect it has on the middle men, the 'poor bloody foot soldiers' on either side of the law who it gets to do its dirty work. His handling of Travis, for instance, would probably have made *Trial* seem shallow. But unfortunately things didn't work out like that, as Chris Boucher recalls, "John wrote a cracking BERGERAC but had, by his own admission, absolutely no understanding of the physics [involved in science fiction]..." His script, which concerned space borne Hell's Angels, was written off on 14th November 1979, shortly before *The Harvest of Kairos* was recorded. The last script of the season, Terry Nation's 'Finale', had been commissioned three months earlier, on 9th August, and once it finished recording (as *Terminal*) on 7th March 1980, everyone involved assumed BLAKE'S SEVEN to be at an end.

Though a continuity announcement contradicted this assumption when the episode was shown only a few weeks later, the official go-ahead for the fourth season didn't come until very late in the day (even by the standards of BLAKE'S SEVEN), and Boucher had to rush to get enough scripts together for the first block of filming. Following on from Boucher's own *Rescue*, Robert Holmes' *Traitor* (originally 'A Land Fit for Helots') and Roger Parkes' *Headhunter* were the first episodes to be commissioned (PNs 02341/0002 and 0003, 24th October and 11th November 1980), with *Stardrive*, *Power* and *Animals* completing the first batch of six episodes. All of these episodes had been intended to feature Cally, and she was to have had the lead role in *Animals*. Chris Boucher recalls, "Jan Chappell decided that she didn't want to do [season four], and she decided that at very short notice. I already had her in four scripts. As far as I remember, I had four scripts written, and she was supposed to be in all six, and suddenly she decided she didn't want to do it. I had to kill her off screen and she refused to do even lines off screen, except for the one word, so I had to write round that." No decision had apparently been taken as to which episode Cally would have left in , though *Animals* — which would have reunited her with former mentor and lover, Justin — would have been an obvious candidate. As it was, the actual turn of events was to have significant effects when the time came to script the season cliffhanger.

Author Colin Davis suggested a number of ideas, including a two part season conclusion which were too similar to scripts already in the pipeline, before he was commissioned for *Gold*, but only one unused script seems to have been formally commissioned for season four. 'Ragnorok', by Graham Williams, was the thirteenth script commissioned (*Orbit* had been the twelfth), on 27th March 1981. Chris Boucher remembers, "We did commission that one, but I don't know if we ever got it, at least more than the first draft. I do vaguely remember it but it didn't work and was a write off." 'Ragnorok' was formally commissioned by Vere Lorrimer, which suggests that much of its development took place while Boucher was busy writing *Blake*, and which might explain why he never saw any later drafts.

Travis

There was one more script written for season four — Paul Darrow's 'Man of Iron'. This was apparently written sometime after production of the season began in April 1981. But unlike Ian McCulloch's scripts for SURVIVORS, and John Bown's 'Gridlock' episode which was informally commissioned as an emergency back-up for the third season of DOOMWATCH, 'Man of Iron' (which is covered in detail by Andrew Pixley and Una McCormack elsewhere in this issue) was never considered for use. "I didn't see it, it never came across my desk, I had nothing to do with it. It had nothing to do with the official scripting of BLAKE'S SEVEN," recalls Chris Boucher. Viewers had been suggesting that Darrow write a script for sometime, but Darrow had previously dismissed this encouragement, explaining that to write a script for your own character would seem egotistical, while writing it for one of the others would defeat the purpose of the exercise. Unfortunately the script is not very good (though it is only an early draft, and might well have improved), being more reminiscent of fifties B-features than BLAKE'S SEVEN, and has a resolution which would have provoked groans of disbelief across the country.

The content of the season had been more or less decided by this point anyway, with the final episode written. Remembering his troubles earlier in the season and, perhaps, Steven Grief's departure halfway through the scripting of *Trial*, Boucher wrote a cliffhanger designed to ease any cast changes for the fifth season.

"The deaths at the end, they weren't deaths, they were cliff-hangers. If they didn't want to continue with their contracts then they were dead, and the ones who did weren't. Gareth was dead, he asked to be deaded, he said that he wouldn't appear unless he was deaded, finally and completely (he'd forgotten all about the clone), which is why his guts flopped out and nobody else's did ... As far as I was concerned, everybody else was alive, or not, as the contracts dictated, and I was quite happy to do whatever was necessary to explain, or justify who was dead and who was alive."

Unfortunately, the BBC had other plans.

Anthony Brown

- With thanks to Chris Boucher for his help. Readers should however note that, after fifteen years, Chris Boucher's memory of certain events is understandably a little hazy, and readers should not therefore assume that suppositions made, on obviously patchy evidence, in this article have been confirmed by him.
- scripts are held by Horizon, the Blake's Seven Appreciation Society, and are available to members.

Man of Iron

Una McCormack and **Andrew Pixley** elaborate on one of the unmade Blake's Seven scripts...

AN UNPRODUCED script for BLAKE'S SEVEN that has recently come to light would have enjoyed an unusual distinction had it ever been made into an episode — it would have been the only BLAKE'S SEVEN story written by a member of the cast. This seems to be a rarity for British telefantasy series (apart from obvious examples such as the McGoohan controlled epic THE PRISONER and a variety of enthusiastic but abortive DOCTOR WHO suggestions from Tom Baker), and generally actors stick to acting whilst writers do the writing.

Man of Iron is scripted as an adventure using the format of BLAKE'S SEVEN's fourth and final season by the man that many instantly associate with the programme — Paul Darrow. Always a keen devotee of the show in which he became the star, Darrow's writing association with the programme has already led to the publication of his first BLAKE'S SEVEN-related novel. *Avon — A Terrible Aspect*, which deals with the story of the early life of Kerr Avon (Darrow's own character in the series), has been published in the United States as a beautiful hardback volume, followed recently by a decidedly more psychedelic paperback. Rumours also abound that Paul is currently working on a follow-up, again taking his character beyond the realms of the small screen.

Man of Iron seems to have been Paul Darrow's only attempt at writing an actual script for the series, a copy of which was offered by Darrow for auction at a convention, and the luck winner has thoughtfully allowed a duplicate to be made by Horizon (the BLAKE'S SEVEN Appreciation Society) so that fans of the programme could have the opportunity to read this unique item in BLAKE'S SEVEN history. (Copies of the script are available to Horizon members).

Man of Iron synopsis

THE EPISODE opens by describing a sandy beach on the planet Epsilon. Avon, armed with a pump-action shotgun, moves out from hiding and quickly makes his way across an exposed reach of sand. Halfway across he fires his weapon, destroying a 'human/robot' that is tracking him and reducing it to a jumble of metal. Avon moves on, but sees that he is being pursued by two other robots. Moving into a wooded area, he falls into a pit and, whilst clambering out, loses his teleport bracelet.

In orbit aboard Scorpio, an anxious Vila attempts to contact Avon with no success. Slave expresses concern about the vessel's low fuel levels and advises a return to Xenon base. Vila refuses, but contacts Xenon for advice. When Tarrant learns of the fuel situation, he orders Vila to bring the ship back and abandon Avon. Unwillingly, Vila complies.

On Epsilon, Avon is finally captured by two of the human/robots. He is watched via a television monitor in a communications chamber by a middle-aged man in a wheelchair named Algor. Algor is furious that Avon has destroyed some of his robotic creations, and swears to kill him. It is revealed that Servalan is with him in the chamber. She points out that the robots were among the scientist's lesser creations. She herself is more interested in Algor's main achievement — Gabor — which its creator claims is invincible.

Avon is brought before Algor and Servalan, and Algor decides to have the prisoner killed. Algor believes that Avon has come to destroy Gabor, which he reveals is an indestructible humanoid robot. In fact, Avon has come to kill Algor himself. Avon is clearly disgusted by Algor's research, which has involved experiments on humans, and swears that he will kill him. Algor has Avon taken away to be executed, and turns his attentions back to negotiations with Servalan.

Back at Xenon base, Tarrant, Dayna and Soolin are unwilling to return to Epsilon, convinced that Avon is dead. Producing a shotgun from under a table, Vila forces them to head back and attempt a rescue.

Algor watches on his monitor as Avon is beaten up by two of his robots in a cell. The genius is concerned that once Servalan has Gabor, she will double-cross him. To avoid this situation, Algor tells Servalan that he has programmed Gabor with a neutron bomb which will explode should she go back on her deal.

Scorpio comes back into orbit around Epsilon, with Tarrant, Soolin and Vila teleporting down to the beach whilst Dayna stays in orbit. The trio find the remains of the robot Avon destroyed. On Scorpio, Slave alerts Dayna to the ship's worsening fuel situation.

In his cell, an exhausted Avon looks up to see another robot as it moves in to finish him off. He manages to overpower and destroy it, escaping from his prison. His flight sets off an alarm, and Algor and Servalan are alerted to the fact that he has escaped. Algor despatches his last two robots to kill Avon.

The two robots find Avon, but are destroyed by Tarrant and Soolin. Avon announces his intention to return and kill Algor, and instructs Tarrant and the others to keep Gabor out of his way. Algor is persuaded by Servalan to release Gabor, and the activated robot begins its relentless pursuit of Tarrant, Vila and Soolin.

Avon reaches Algor's chamber after Servalan has left for her own ship. Algor is alone, but fires at Avon with a gun built into his wheelchair. The gun jams and Algor retreats into his bathroom. Avon follows Algor, manages to fling him in the bath and holds the scientist's head underwater until he drowns. This suddenly causes Avon to realise Gabor's weakness: water. He contacts Tarrant and tells him that water can destroy the otherwise indestructible robot. Tarrant and the others swim out to sea, and when Gabor attempts to follow them it is destroyed. Avon, Tarrant, Vila and Soolin return to Scorpio, and the ship leaves Epsilon.

THE SCRIPT as it stands is very short and would probably need extra material to spin it out to a full fifty minutes. That said, it contains the fast moving plot and action elements that characterised the fourth season, and was written with both economy of artistes and locations in mind. Paul Darrow also indicates specialist props that would be needed in some scenes, plus a suggestion that Algor's bathroom set — because of the action scenes and use of water — should be shot on film at Ealing. Orac is not an essential plot element either, which was unusual for this part of the show's history. One area where the script is lacking is that there is no description of the human/robots (apart from the fact that one could be played by a woman). It remains unclear if these are pure automata or cyborgs, or how they appear. Avon's comments about experimentation on humans indicates cyborgs, yet other evidence in the script shows that Algor's creations are purely mechanical. Since the Federation already possessed both androids and limited-cyborg technology in the form of Mutoids, it is to be presumed that Servalan wanted the human/robots as a weapon for herself to regain power. The vulnerability to water of the robots is also worrying — would they have to don plastic macs at the first hint of rain?

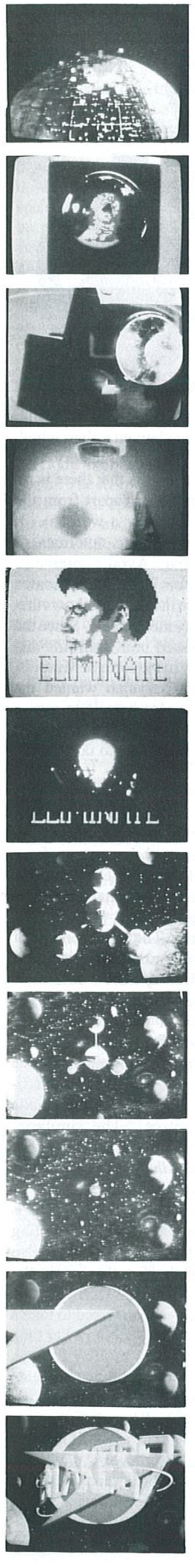
Man of Iron reflects one of the running themes for the earlier episodes in Season D, where the stories are characterised by the crew of Scorpio attempting to elicit help and inventions from various eminent scientists, notably Dr Plaxton in *Stardrive* and Justin in the much-maligned *Animals* (an excellent original script which is let down by poor execution). The involvement of Scorpio's crew with another expert — this time a robotic engineer — in *Man of Iron* would have fitted in neatly with these earlier instalments, but by mid-way through the run Vere Lorrimer and Chris Boucher had already found the formula to be unsuccessful. In Darrow's script, though, the motivation is very different: the aim is to eradicate rather than acquire, which could have made the script seem out of place. The similarity between the indestructible Gabor in *Man of Iron* and Muller's android in *Headhunter* may also have caused problems with repetition of ideas.

Of all the characters in the script it is, perhaps unsurprisingly, Avon that fares the best, getting both the most lines and the most to do. He is also very much the Avon of the fourth season and Darrow's novel: a man of action rather than the outsider of Season A to C who preferred to take a backseat and let the others get shot at rather than risk his own neck. He is also, in *Man of Iron*, motivated by altruism — he wants to eradicate Algor and his creations because he perceives them as evil, not because he will benefit from their destruction; nor does he want to acquire Gabor or the technology that created it. Avon's unusually selfless actions, casting him more as a conventional 'hero', perhaps deserve attention — what was it

continued on page 19

Around the galaxy in fifty seconds

Continuing our occasional look at the art of the opening title sequence, this issue rather predictably we turn the spotlight on Blake's 7



THE PURPOSE of a title sequence is to introduce the programme which follows. Self evident? Well, the follow-through is that the more unusual or complex a series' concept, the more important is its title sequence …

Now that explains why ninety percent of television title sequences are so dull. There's so little concept to explain.

Consider one of the most unimaginative title sequences of recent years, DEMPSEY AND MAKEPEACE. It had six concepts to establish:

1) They're cops.
2) They're violent cops.
3) One of them's American.
4) The other one's a woman.
5) They fancy each other rotten, but pretend not to.
6) They have a grumpy boss.

Each of these can be reduced to one simple image — one clip. Edit them together, fill the next thirty seconds with a mechanically-edited series of action clips, and you've got a title sequence. A dull and unimaginative one, but it established the tone of the series.

Similarly, it's hardly surprising that most of the WOGAN title sequences were nothing more than adverts for the cleverness of the graphics programmers, which tells you more about the attitudes of the producers (remember the first one, which showed the series' logo dominating the London skyline? At the time they genuinely thought the show would be unmissable …) than the programme. Only the one where the guests' images came together to form the face of the Greatest Living Irishman expressed the concept of the series — but that was so basic anyway that this hardly mattered.

Telefantasy series don't have it so easy. Try reducing DOCTOR WHO to its basic concepts — you've got time travel, space travel, the TARDIS, bigger-inside-than-out, regeneration … It's not surprising that the titles to most telefantasy series content themselves with establishing an atmosphere. Even a voice-over doesn't help — the NEXT GENERATION titles make no mention of Klingons, Androids, transporters … Picard doesn't even refer to the Federation and Starfleet. All he tells you is that the Enterprise's mission is the exploration of space. The bare bones of the original concept — all they could fit in.

All of which underlines quite how impressive the original BLAKE'S SEVEN title sequence is … It may not tell you much about the characters, but it tells you just about everything else — and it does it subliminally …

THE TITLES begin with a shot of the night sky, the backdrop to an immense, futuristic domed city, whose surface erupts in a stylised explosion. In these first few images, it establishes that this series is set in a technologically-advanced, star-spanning society — but one in an era of violent conflict. This impression is confirmed when the explosion fills with the computerised image of a man's face, screaming in pain. This image persists for a second, reflected in the lens of a surveillance camera which looks, first left, then right, then straight at the camera … Big Brother is watching you. And if he doesn't like what he sees …?

The picture cuts to a shot of a Federation guard, lit so that his uniform appears red — blood red. His gun whips up and he fires, the bolt blotting out the screen. This is a government which uses techniques of Orwellian surveillance, systematic torture and simple brutality to maintain its control, which will not hesitate to destroy its enemies. But who are its enemies?

The red of the blanked-out screen becomes the word ELIMINATE, emblazoned across a computerised image of a face — the face of the man previously seen under torture. This is the Federation's principal enemy — Blake? His face retreats from the camera as stars and planets streak past, bleaching to a skull-like image as it does so, only for this vision of death to become the Liberator, the ship which will allow him to strike back. The Federation will try to destroy Blake by exiling him beyond the stars, but in doing so they will provide him with the means of his deliverance.

Liberator advances on the camera, through a galaxy unnaturally filled with looming, dramatic worlds. As the ship reaches the camera, our point of view swings round to show the retreating vessel's rear view — a pulsing green globe. This becomes a red disc which advances on the camera, and fragments. Pierced by a chevron, it forms the linked worlds emblem of the Federation.

The theme music turns sombre for a moment. But then a glowing point swings round the globe, leaving a golden trail which then, triumphantly, spills out the words 'Blakes 7' … But this image fades, leaving the Federation emblem. Victory may prove short-lived …

A number of elements combined to make this first title sequence so effective. Bob Blagden's graphics design certainly contributed a lot, but much of the credit must be given to Terry Nation himself, who established the basic idea for the title sequence in an early draft of the first episode:

"We are in a basement computer room, a dimly-lit echoing cavern of a place. Unplastered walls without windows, concrete floor, totally utilitarian. There is no soul in this room.

"We are on the facia of a vast computor [sic], silent and lifeless, much of its detail lost in deep shadow. We establish the silence for a few moments, then with almost startling suddenness an instrument dial lights up brightly. Its needle swings across the scale. At the same time there is a faint electrical hum.

"A second dial lights and a new sound is added. A third register is illuminated, then a fourth. With each comes another electrical or mechanical sound.

"The computor is wakening, coming to life, with increasing speed the instruments flash into action. Banks of indicator lights flicker. Spools of tape begin to revolve, until finally all the functions of the computor are operating, clicking, whirring, chattering, humming.

"We favour the punch card sorting function of the computor. With dazzling speed the machine spits out cards and sorts them into slotted trays. Establish, then go to a close-up on one of the trays.

"Into the tray falls a card on which is pasted a small photograph beside which is a name and some closely printed information.

"This card and the others which follow show the photographs and records of the characters who make up Blake's Seven.

"We have only a brief glimpse of each card as it falls. Each card as it falls obscures all but the photograph of the card beneath it.

"The final card shows the photograph, name and record of Roj Blake. Establish.

"We angle up to show that the tray into which these cards have fallen is clearly marked Enemies of State.

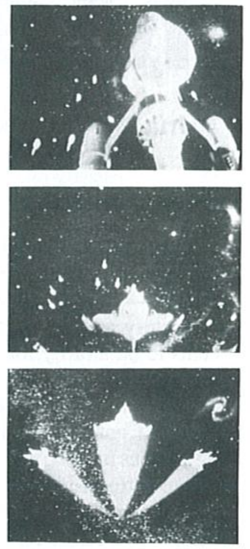
"Special effects sequence. A journey through space as though seen from the nose of a fast-travelling rocket. Celestial bodies starting as pin-points of light grow at fantastic speed and blast past our viewpoint with a rush and roar. Super onto this the faces of our leading characters. They too start as tiny faces that enlarge to big close-ups before they too appear to go past camera.

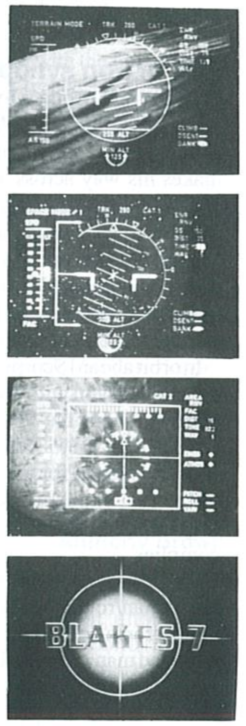
"Super: Blake's Seven.

"Super: Other credits.

"Toward the end of these credits our viewpoint seems to be taking us directly toward a planet. The detail of the planet grows with great speed and we are obviously on a collision course.

"With the apparent impact the screen is filled with a roaring swirl of fire and smoke. Over the billowing smoke, super: Episode title and author credit …"





Left: the original title sequence, from series one and two. *Above:* the third series titles featuring Federation pursuit ships, and the fourth series' 'head-up' display.

Despite the differences in technology, this outline clearly establishes the basic concept of the transmitted titles. In its slam-bang-explosion approach it's inferior to the version seen on screen of course, but the fusion of ideas produced a sequence of almost unique effectiveness. (It's also interesting to note that Nation outlined another classic title sequence — that of SURVIVORS. Perhaps this approach should be followed more often.) Unfortunately, its successors are nowhere near the same standard.

In the original outline, the faces of all the Seven were to have appeared on-screen, and they were presumably omitted as a precaution against cast changes. No one could reasonably have expected that Blake himself would leave the series, but he did, and a new title sequence debuted with the third season. Whether this was really necessary is debatable. The pixelation of Blake's face made it less 'personalised' than might otherwise have been the case, and it could have been retained as his name was retained — as a symbol of the series' inspiration.

The new titles were to be far simpler. They open with a series of tracer shots arching across a starfield, followed a moment later by the Liberator, and then by a Federation pursuit flotilla. They then show a rocky planet, which drops away to reveal a vague yellow glow, from which an obviously animated Liberator emerges, leaving a yellow trail behind her. The glow becomes red and produces three Federation pursuit ships, which the camera follows as they pass overhead. Leaving a red trail behind them, they disappear into the mass of the galaxy, from which the Federation emblem emerges as before.

Though the opening shots of this sequence remain somewhat effective, its later stages are clumsily drawn, and it would have been less than inspiring even if it hadn't had such impressive shoes to fill. It does, however, manage to retain some of the series' basic concept, as the Liberator is clearly on the run, pursued by Federation forces. That's more than the fourth season titles could manage …

Technically, the fourth season titles, the head-up display of a spacecraft rising from a rocky planet into orbit, are excellent, though the planet itself looks a little artificial. But conceptually they're entirely empty, establishing only the idea of spaceflight in a manner which could have served any number of series. Even the enigmatic juxtaposition of the Federation and series emblems was abandoned, in favour of a logo which was nothing more than a stylish way of writing BLAKE'S SEVEN. The sequence fails in one other important respect — though Vere Lorrimer had hoped it would be a 'fascinator', it rapidly bores as it is entirely predictable. Though ever-changing, the changes are utterly unimportant to anyone bar the pilot of the craft.

If BLAKE'S SEVEN ever returns it will need a new title sequence. But whatever else that sequence contains, two elements are essential. It must include the Federation emblem, and — however Gareth Thomas may feel — it must include Blake's face, as a representation of his legacy, and the danger that even in death he poses to the Federation. As Che Guevara would tell you, a revolutionary's real fame begins after his death …

Anthony Brown

Man of Iron

continued from page 17

that made him so desperate to destroy Algor and his work? Had a relative or loved one been a victim of Algor's experiments on humans? Avon's motivation is never fully explored or explained — the fact that Algor is evil is insufficient grounds for Avon to go through so much to kill him.

As for the other characters, Tarrant is portrayed as antagonistic towards Avon, a trait that was displayed frequently in Season C, but which was largely dropped by the final season. Vila is surprisingly decisive, forcing the others to return to rescue Avon — definitely indicating that the script was written before Darrow knew of Robert Holmes' masterpiece *Orbit* (in which Avon is prepared to kill Vila to save himself). Algor himself is a little disappointing as a villain, being merely yet another megalomaniac evil genius the like of which seem to populate science-fiction a little too frequently. Perhaps more could have been made of his desire to create invulnerable, perfect robots in the light of his own disabilities. One character who enjoys some really funny lines is Slave who, throughout the script, displays an obsession with Scorpio's low fuel levels, and frequently pipes up with great lines. For example, when Tarrant asks Vila about the ship's fuel situation, Slave mumbles to himself "I'm glad he asked that"; and throughout the narrative the computer punctuates the action with remarks like "I'll say just one word — fuel!" Slave becomes more like Eddie in *The Hitch Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, a persona that is infinitely more entertaining than the obsequious cringer that viewers of the series actually had to endure.

The women in the script, as usual, are tragically under-used. Servalan sits around looking nasty for a while before scooting off when things look as if they're going to get rough. Soolin fires her gun occasionally. All Dayna has to do is gnaw her fingernails anxiously for a while on board Scorpio whilst Slave indulges in non-sequiturs and others get all the action on Epsilon. This is unsurprising, and by no means a fault unique to Darrow's *Man of Iron* script. The fact is that women's roles in the BLAKE'S SEVEN universe are undeniably weak, and each of the female crew members — plus Gan to a certain extent — suffered badly from underwriting and misuse. In the light of such poorly-developed female characters, it is unsurprising that Paul Darrow opted to use the rather better defined male characters as the main protagonists in his script.

artwork by Pete Wallbank

Man of Iron is thus an interesting curio in the BLAKE'S SEVEN canon. It offers few surprises in terms of plot, which is essentially solid adventure with robots as opposed to any innovations in the series, and, as mentioned, owes a lot to the early Season D instalments. The plot relies heavily on violence — there are numerous fight sequences, Avon is beaten up quite badly by a human/robot and the graphic murder of Algor by drowning would have been quite strong for the series. It is also unusual that the archaic form of pump-action shotguns should be defined as weapons wielded by both Avon and Vila during the episode. The script also falls back on the tried and tested roles for the regulars: Tarrant as Avon's opponent, Servalan as the baddie, Dayna as teleport operator, etc.

The exceptions to this are an all-new wisecracking and far more entertaining Slave, and the character played by Paul Darrow himself. The script of *Man of Iron*, combined with *Avon — A Terrible Aspect*, offer a fascinating insight into the actor's conception of his character. Avon no longer relies on cynicism and intellectual superiority — he acts, rather than thinks. Avon is now a man who has led a frequently brutal life rather than a civilised man who has been thrown into uncivilised circumstances; as a consequence, his actions are more violent; the justice he metes out is rough. *Man of Iron* is a tantalising clue of the direction in which Darrow may have taken his character had a fifth season of BLAKE'S SEVEN ever come about.

With thanks to Kevin and Fliss Davies for their help.

End-game to Lorrimer

AS THE RESULTS of last year's *DWB* survey go to show, Season Four of BLAKE'S SEVEN is still very much top of everyone's hate-list. But why? Why is it that this season is singled out so overwhelmingly for such violent criticism?

In trying to defend this season, I am well aware of some of the major arguments against it; there's no Liberator, the visuals are poor, Soolin's dreadful, "I hate Scorpio" and so on. But frankly, this doesn't matter to me. Vere Lorrimer was an excellent choice as successor-producer (imagine if Pennant Roberts had been offered it!), and I find the season more consistently satisfying than any other. Admittedly there's nothing as good as *Rumours of Death* or *Terminal* from the much vaunted Season Three, but at the same time there's nothing as atrocious as *Moloch*, as tepid as *Volcano* or as idiotic as *Harvest of Kairos*. I really find Season Four to be business as usual for BLAKE'S SEVEN; it has its share of dud episodes but the preponderance of them are soundly written, exciting adventures. For God's sake, look at how crap an episode like *Mission to Destiny* is before damning a good, well-paced script like *Assassin* or *Games*. It's *The Gunfighters* all over again; Season Four is the in thing to slag off — but if more people actually saw *The Gunfighters* they'd realise that there's plenty worse than that adventure lurking in the WHO archives.

If *Gunfighters* was a WHO story trying to be different that didn't quite come off, then Season Four was a season that *had* to be different by necessity: and I don't think it failed in that. What was meant to happen; another DSV to come floating past Terminal with a long rope-ladder? Cast another actress as Cally? OK, so Soolin wasn't an inspired choice of replacement, being somewhat bland and wooden, but as a friend of mine recently pointed out — could you give a 500 word character study of Jenna, or Gan? It's impossible, they're just Nation cyphers for plot, acted in such a way as to vaguely endear them to us in the same way as a rather crap cousin might. Soolin may not be great, or even necessary, but they had to justify the title somehow, didn't they? Nation landed them with that, too …

Rescue is a decent enough story; obviously it's a mite convenient that they are visited by the only man close to completing a teleport system, but as the alternative would be acres of stock model footage every time Scorpio landed (and the model work there was was bad enough, right?), then practicality had to win out over logical probability (ever heard of willing substitute for the alien glory of the Liberator), but at least those bloody vacuum cleaner pipes had gone for good. And Slave, whilst not matching up to the wonderful Zen, was at least a good try at being different. Why is innovation so harshly criticised? If Davison had played the Doctor like Baker, fandom would have been up in arms. Admittedly, B7 is not WHO, but it was nonetheless forced to regenerate thanks to the 'get-out-of-that' situation bequeathed in *Terminal*.

Given the number of hairy alien savages that yelled and bullied their way through the worlds of BLAKE'S SEVEN (*Deliverance, Hostage, The Keeper, Aftermath* etc etc), how can fans decry an episode like *Power*? Soolin's not even in it till the end! There's plenty of Avon swaggering around (always my favourite part of a BLAKE'S SEVEN story!), and Pella is quite a decent guest enemy. *Traitor*, on the other hand, is terrible, and should rank alongside other episodes such as *Horizon, Breakdown, Voice From The Past* and so on. Servalan deserved a better re-entrance, and should have been spared all that Sleer rubbish.

Stardive is a traditional type of story, and of course conveniently makes Scorpio jolly fast — at least a quite convincing story is made out of it, though. The action on the Space Rats' trikes is pretty impressive as well. Perhaps critics of Season Four would remember Cally's fight in *Seek-Locate-Destroy* — one of the rubbishiest moments in any adventure series. At least the stunts this season were well executed (*Assassin, Gold* and others).

I don't see why *Animals* is detested quite as much as it is. Og and his mates had a certain pathos, and the whole issue of Dayna's crush on Justin conflicting with her hatred for his genetic work was quite nicely handled. Give me an episode like this over turgid rubbish like *Hostage*, *Bounty* or *Volcano* any day. If nothing else there's the spectacle of Avon nearly slipping over as he tries to be terribly butch upon bursting into the shelter.

Headhunter, Assassin and *Games* are all well-structured little pieces, containing some memorable moments of interaction and characterisation easily as strong as any other season's. *Headhunter* sees Avon disregarding his own safety in trying to rescue Muller's lady, *Assassin* has the tensions (hinted as far back as *City At The Edge Of The World*) between Tarrant and Avon coming perilously close to the surface, and *Games* has a mini-celebration of the individual talents of the crew in its final 'City of the Exillons-esque' scenes. The dialogue between the cast was as good as, if not better than ever; take this extract from *Assassin*:

Vila: You sure you can handle them on your own?
Avon: Well, I don't know … perhaps you'd better come with me.
Vila: Oh … oh well, if you like. But it's bad luck you know — changing your plans once you've started them.
Avon: My hero …

or, from *Headhunter*, for example:

Avon: (to Tarrant) You fool … it's superstitious half-wits like you that hold back every advance we make!
Orac: And arrogance, Avon, like yours and Muller's, that threatened to destroy.
Avon: Shut up!
Orac: Yes … Master!

Sand moved away from the more 'collective' stories to highlight Tarrant and Servalan. It is not only a sensitively written episode, it is also ingenious and dramatic. The deranged computer droning out variations on Keller's name, Jaqueline Pearce's haunting performance, the pathos of Vila's self-pitying soliloquies all make this episode one of the most special in the whole series. With a script as good as *Sand*, who cares if the CSO is wonky on Vern, or if the sky's just a cut-out? At least there's nothing as bad as the still-photograph backgrounds in *Duel* — had nothing changed since *Terror of the Autons*?! The dialogue was again sparkling; when Tarrant tells the crew he thinks Servalan turned on the tears to gain his sympathy, Avon cuts in "And she got it, too, didn't she — your… sympathy, I mean".

And quite why a minor classic like *Gold* should be placed below an illogical no hoper like *Weapon* in the *DWB* poll is entirely beyond me. The script is very clever, with one of the greatest twists ever ("We risked our lives to make Servalan rich!") and one of the most memorable guest performances in the series by Roy Kinnear. The model shots of the Space Princess are superb, the action fast and furious (particularly the battle in the Xeros plant and Avon's near death when the two ships start disengaging), and even Soolin's pretty good. Why isn't this story number nine instead of a pointless run-of-the-mill chase story like *Orac*? I demand a recount!

At least *Orbit* makes quite a good showing — and quite right too! This episode is easily one of the strongest in the series. Another clever script, another brilliant guest role from John Savident, and one of the most chilling scenes ever as Avon stalks the shuttle in search of Vila… the tension of the last fifteen minutes is phenomenal — who cares if Orac doesn't slide off when the shuttle rises upwards? Avon's final, steely line: "Well, as you always say Vila; you know you are safe — with me" ties up a wholly classic adventure — this should be placed much higher than the hackneyed *Duel* or the lightweight *Project Avalon*. Just what is *Duel* doing at number three? Does anyone know?

Quite why *Warlord* should be placed so far down the list is another anomaly. How could any sane poll place it 19 places lower than *Mission to Destiny*? God, it only just beats *Dawn of the Gods*! While *Warlord* is not a great personal favourite, it is so stylishly directed (surely Graeme Harper got some inspiration from here? It is distinctly *Caves*-ish) that its gloss alone sets it apart from the rest of the pack. The destruction of Xenon base is quite sad, and brings home the sense of the Federation net closing in — which of course, it was…

Blake. Number one by a healthy margin in the poll, despite being guilty of all the faults laid at this season's door. The effects are still fairly bad (particularly the flyers), the Liberator's still not in it, Soolin still *is* in it… of course, this episode is a very strong one, but formulaically, it's not much different to the rest of the season — obviously Blake's in it, but then Blake was in *Hostage*. Is it really only the death of the entire (?) crew that makes this episode so popular? What a perverse bunch of fans you all are. *Blake* set the epitaph not only on Season Four but on the entire series. To my mind, it was the climactic finale to an entire season of pacey, well-structured dramas. It went one step further than *Terminal*, and although we may never know where that step finally landed, the 'lifting of the foot', so to speak, was a fine and fitting conclusion to a good series.

Season Four is accused seemingly by everyone of taking a different, fundamentally wrong direction. Surely it is obvious that another season made up of *Deathwatches* and *Ultraworlds* and *Molochs* just would not do? As I have said, the fourth season evolved out of necessity, and did so in a respectable fashion. Tarrant and Dayna's characters were both expanded, tedious battles with the Federation were kept to a minimum, thank God (at least there was none of that stock footage of pursuit ships' plasma bolts or the Liberator sailing past the two lightbulbs etc), and Avon was as embittered and dangerous as ever.

Some say his portrayal was flawed and illogical, that "he just wouldn't act that way". I feel rather that Avon was always far more a member of the collective than even he guessed. Dorian hinted at it, his act of self-sacrifice in *Terminal*'s conclusion would suggest it, and his outrage at Blake in the final part drums it home — "Have you betrayed us? Have you betrayed *me*?" His disbelief when he thinks that even the one man he thought he could depend on has let him down is quite harrowing. Every man needs a purpose in life, and it is obvious that Avon felt that his lay with Blake.

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So, I've said my little piece on this much-maligned season. I only hope that when they watch the videos, people realise that this group of episodes *isn't* the collective Anti-Christ. If you want to slag something off, don't be so general! The same season that gave us *Rumours* and *Sarcophagus* also gave us *Volcano* and *Harvest*. *Star One* is countered most convincingly by *The Keeper* and *Horizon* and so on. *The Way Back* and *Seek-Locate-Destroy* are countered by more-or-less the entire first season, and to my mind, *Orbit* and *Blake* are countered by *Traitor* and *Stardrive*. All I'm doing is to point out that it's a matter of perspective; there's no such thing as a perfect BLAKE'S SEVEN season, and the absence of the Liberator and Cally shouldn't prejudice fans against Season Four to the extent they apparently do now.

Stephen Cole

Blake's 7 tape 26: *Warlord/Blake*

BBC Video; £10.99

WARLORD is one of the weakest episodes of the worst season of BLAKE'S SEVEN. That's the standard verdict on the episode, and for once it's entirely fair. That it's as enjoyable as it is says something very complimentary about the series as a whole!

Warlord also says something about the way the series as a whole had changed. The brutality of the opening sequence, a recording of Federation Guards gunning down zombie-like civilians for sport which Avon plays to potential members of an anti-Federation alliance, has a certain impact, but as a whole this sequence is too derivative and cliched to have any impact. Shaved heads, drugged citizens filing around shopping malls, identity numbers emblazoned on foreheads… Seen it too many times before, and didn't like it then. Compared with the far more restrained and effective portrayal of sedated society seen in *The Way Back* (or even *Traitor*), it suggests that with the influx of new authors this season, BLAKE'S SEVEN had lost its sense of identity, becoming just another dystopia.

It's author Simon Masters' apparent unfamiliarity with BLAKE'S SEVEN which is the main problem with *Warlord*. At times there seems to have been a conflict between the episode he wanted to write, a study of the exigencies of power and the conscience of a dictator, and what he felt a BLAKE'S SEVEN episode ought to be like. The two shouldn't have been in conflict, but the result is that a potentially brilliant episode is continually sabotaged as he 'writes down' to the level required, introducing tiresome cliches such as Tarrant's love affair and an 'airborne radio-active virus'. It isn't just that Tarrant behaves like an idiot throughout the episode — it's that Dayna, Vila, and most of all Soolin go along with the romance in a manner which is totally out of character … In fact, the plot just doesn't hold together at all — Avon would not have told anyone the location of his base!

But in the scenes aboard Zukan's craft, the potential of the episode can be clearly seen. The relationship between Zukan, who unhesitatingly condemns a dozen of his most loyal men to death in the cause of his ambition but is then tormented by the memory, and Finn (played by Katy Manning's ex, Dean Harris), who loyally and without conscience assists in this treachery without ever considering the possibility that he might himself be betrayed, is fascinating, and entirely in the tradition of BLAKE'S SEVEN's underlying debate. This enthralling sequence demonstrates a quiet competence on the part of director Viktors Ritelis, which contrasts incredibly with his overblown use of zooms and video effects elsewhere in the episode. Visually, *Warlord* seems equally schizophrenic, with the outlandish costumes of the conference sequence (one of which reuses a Vogan costume from *Revenge of the Cybermen*, complete with Prydonian seal) balanced by some highly effective flight overalls for the Scorpio crew (they're a little pointless though — did the costume designer have some budget left over?), and some highly effective model sequences let down by an appalling CSO shot of Avon and Soolin.

Faith no more: Avon confronts Blake © *Ken Armstrong*

Among the cast, Roy Boyd as Zukan has come in for quite a bit of stick, and it is somewhat deserved. The whole episode rests on his shoulders, and if it disappoints, then so does he… But he actually does quite a creditable job until his final hysterics. He's really quite compelling when talking about his nightmares ("I see my bad dreams in other people's faces."), and in the conference chamber manages to hint at the perverse charisma of a Hitler. But just think what Pat Troughton, or Patrick Stewart, or Gareth Thomas, come to that, would have done with the part … As Zukan's daughter, Zeeona, Bobbie Brown is at best passable and at worst embarrassing, though the weak scripting of her romantic scenes doesn't help, and the highly emphatic direction of her later traumas would have exposed the weaknesses of all but the strongest actress. But she just wasn't up to the part which needed the sort of performance someone like Josette Simon can produce when stretched. Pity, really, that she's just left sitting around with absolutely nothing to do as usual. (Now there's a thought … suppose Zukan had been an idolised old acquaintance of Dayna's father, and Zeeona hadn't existed … Then you could have retained all the betrayal and disillusionment plot elements and added a genuine emotional involvement, and finally given Josette Simon a role worthy of her into the bargain.) As for the rest of the cast — well, the opening conference shows that Rick James still hasn't learnt to act since making *The Mutants*, and that Charles Augins could do so years before he became Queeg on RED DWARF.

Warlord isn't that bad. It stands head and shoulders over *Animals* and *Stardrive*, over the numerous disasters of season three, and even over some of the blander episodes towards the end of season one. But it's nowhere near as good as it could have been, and it proves beyond doubt that if you want people to view an episode as a serious character study, then it's best to ensure that the character doesn't have pink hair … **(4)**

BLAKE comes with a bit of a reputation, doesn't it? Or rather, several reputations. A few years ago, after the fourth season repeats, Horizon ran an article asking whether "this episode was really as dreadful and disastrous as it appeared first time round?" (The answer was, more or less, yes!) For years, *Blake* stood condemned as the ultimate heresy — not so much an episode, more an excuse to end the series. Yet *DWB* readers voted it the best episode of all. The truth, of course is somewhere in between — I wouldn't even rate it as the best episode of the season. But it is difficult to assess, because it's as atypical of the series as a whole as *The Way Back*, in a far more subtle way.

Every series has its own theatre — a series of unwritten rules which determine which aspects of real life can be ignored in the interests of drama. Inspector Morse never locks his car, for instance, but it doesn't get stolen, and he rarely has a hangover, however much he drinks. In BLAKE'S SEVEN, you come to accept that Liberator and Scorpio can hang in orbit undetected for that duration of the episode without any explanation of the measures taken to shield her from radar, and you accept that the crew will chance upon the local resistance soon after landing so that the plot can progress unrestricted. But *Blake* breaks the rules.

There's a WHO DARES WINS sketch in which ALLO ALLO opens with the arrival of a shaven headed Yvette, who explains that the resistance have dealt with her serving Germans in the cafe. Herr Flick has just rounded up twelve hostages for execution when the announcer cuts in and apologises for the unexpected intrusion of reality into the show. *Blake* reminds me of that. Suddenly, unpleasant little realities which would make the Seven's life one of constant danger resurface disastrously. Gauda Prime seems more dirty and primitive than any world seen since Cygnus Alpha. This (as I assume everyone knows) is the episode that features Federation guards who've been taught how to aim …

All of which makes *Blake* a disturbing experience. From the opening shots it surprises, by doing the unthinkable, and highlighting the overlooked, and even once the shock of these moments, and *that* ending, has become blunted by familiarity, it remains an unsettling episode to watch. Most troubling of all is the change in Blake. It's because we're no longer sure who Blake is that his actions seem so incomprehensible.

But those who ask why Blake should test Avon are missing the point — he's testing Tarrant, because Blake's intelligent enough to realise that the first plan to catch him that some bright young spark in Federation security's going to come up with runs something like this:

Take one Wander Class Three planet hopper and give it false number plates. Find three Federation agents who match Tarrant, Dayna and Soolin's descriptions. Brief them well, and send them out with some cover story about Avon and Vila's fate in the hope that Blake will accept them as his old friends' new colleagues, and take them into his confidence …

The old Blake probably wouldn't have thought of that. But he's no longer the old Blake, and one can't help wondering whether Gareth Thomas might not have returned to the series, at least for a while, if he'd been offered this character development before he'd insisted that Blake be killed off. After all, he'd left in the first place because he felt there was nothing more he could do with the role within the confines of the series' format. That format would now have been entirely different. An intriguing 'what if' …

On the production side, the episode does have its weaknesses. Its model work is very disappointing, particularly after the successes of *Warlord*. The sets are uninspired, and the destruction of Scorpio's flight deck is disappointingly reminiscent of Liberator's end. Among the cast, Steven Pacey copes rather better than in *Warlord*, while Josette 'Fifth Wheel' Simon continues to do nothing in long-practised style. (Why is it that the best actress in science fiction series tend to get the worst parts?) Glynis Barber though gives an unexpectedly variable performance, perhaps her worst ever — when describing her parents' fate she gestures and emotes in a stylised manner reminiscent of a first year drama student, producing expressions to order. But Paul Darrow is on fine form (except while throwing himself around Scorpio's flight deck), picking up (as does Mary Ridge) on Chris Boucher's succinct summation of the Seven — thieves, killers, mercenaries, psychopaths… He's out-acted only by Michael Keating (superb in all the Scorpio scenes), and by Gareth Thomas. He's never been better than in the one, brief scene where he and Deva drop the pretence — for perhaps the first time ever Blake seems to have the steel and determination necessary for his crusade to succeed. He might have won after all …

But it all ends in tragedy instead. *Blake* wasn't intended as the final episode, but that's what it's become, and as such both it and the series have gained a whole new meaning they were never meant to have, but which has made them unique. It wasn't the episode anyone expected to see, and it's one many people didn't want to accept, but on its own terms it's a resounding success. And different though it is, it's an entirely appropriate conclusion to BLAKE'S SEVEN, a series which was always willing to be different. **(9)**

Anthony Brown

The novels of Blake's 7

PROJECT AVALON
BY TREVOR HOYLE
BLAKE'S 7
THEIR FIRST ADVENTURE
BLAKE'S 7
Based on the great TV series
BLAKE'S 7
BY TREVOR HOY
SCORPIO ATTACK
BY TREVOR HOYLE

Blake's 7
Project Avalon
Scorpio Attack
by Trevor Hoyle

OF THE THREE BLAKE'S SEVEN novels (*Afterlife* not withstanding), the first, simply called *Blake's 7*, is undoubtedly the most satisfying. Its success rests in its greater coherence, the reason for which is not hard to discern. As a novelisation of the first four episodes it has a logical narrative thrust missing from *Project Avalon* and *Scorpio Attack*. It works as a novel in the same way as the first BLAKE'S SEVEN video, *The Beginning*, almost works as a film. The serial nature of the episodes, when run together, allows you to forget that episodes is what they were. The structure of the video is in fact quite filmic, establishing a scenario (the creation of the Seven) and then demonstrating them as a unit within the situation where they operate (their first strike against the Federation on Saurian Major). *Blake's 7* works quite well as a movie-style novelisation. It is hardly a great work of literature, but it is a good example of what it tries to be, and even an entertaining read to boot.

This comparison is worth making because, quality aside, *Project Avalon* is markedly less successful and, returning to the video analogy, the reasons are similar. The episodes covered by *Project Avalon* are all five of the Stephen Greif Travis episodes. Just as the editing together of *Seek-Locate Destroy, Duel* and *Project Avalon* into the video *Duel* failed for the lack of a coherent narrative thrust, so the first 145 pages of *Project Avalon* fail to work as a novel.

The remainder of the book is more successful. The third of the original BLAKE videos, like the first, is an ongoing story. The story of the discovery of Orac and the subsequent capture by the System, apart from some extraneous plot irrelevances, just about forms a feature-length (horrid but unavoidable term) story. *Project Avalon* ends with the apparent destruction of the Liberator — "a menacing cloud of destruction blotting out the stars" — and wisely ignores all the nonsense on Cephlon with the hairy tribesmen and Avon being worshipped by a half-dressed woman with an amazingly phallic spaceship, and gets straight to Aristo.

Curiously, though, Hoyle retains the recapitulation dialogue that began *Orac*, which was only ever there to remind viewers of what had happened in the previous episode. This is odd because he had already demonstrated an adeptness for redrafting the scripts to be more appropriate to novel form by ignoring most of *Deliverance*, but it is not too much of a problem. What it does do though is point up an oddity about the previous book. The only thing that undermines *Blake's 7* as a novel is the presence of the Findus Fiends in *Time Squad*. This bit of the narrative was typical of Terry Nation's rather crass dual plotting, here intended to give the people who remained on the Liberator something to do, or, more usually, to create some reason to strand the away team on the planet. As usual, in *Time Squad*, the two plots are not linked in any way at all, and so, in the context of a self-contained novel, which is what *Blake's 7* is trying to be, it jars rather badly. It would have been difficult to cut out of the video version, but Hoyle could quite easily have redrafted it out of the book. That he chose not to do so is a shame because it undermines the narrative continuity which almost enables you to forget that the book is a novelisation of four television episodes. It is also very boring. That said, however, the sections with Jenna searching the ship for the unfrozen assassin are the best-written parts of the entire book.

By the time he wrote *Project Avalon* Hoyle seemed to have cottoned on to the way Terry Nation wrote his scripts, but since the material he was working with was less cohesive anyway it didn't really matter. By the time of *Scorpio Attack* any pretence at writing a novel was abandoned, which is just as well because the three episodes used (*Rescue*, *Traitor* and *Stardrive*) are not connected at all. The choice of episodes in this case is actually very odd in terms of coherence, because the opportunity for a single narrative was present. If Hoyle had chosen *Power* instead of *Traitor* (always assuming that the choice was his), he could have produced a book with a single narrative, as *Rescue* and *Power* are quite closely linked, and *Stardrive* would then tell of the Seven overcoming the inadequacies of the ship they come by in the first two episodes. Better still, it could have started with *Terminal* instead of beginning with no explanation at all as to why Avon and co. are stuck on the planet without a spaceship, but as the book was published to coincide with the new series this was obviously not on. As it is, *Scorpio Attack* is more like the STAR TREK books. The three episodes are presented distinctly under their original titles as Parts One, Two and Three, albeit with continuing chapter numbers. *Project Avalon* also has Parts One and Two, but the division is bizarre, coming after *Duel*, when it much more logically would separate the Orac story.

Of the three *Scorpio Attack* is the most faithful to its source material, and that *Blake's 7* was written before the series aired is quite noticeable. The description of the flight deck, for example, is of a large chamber where "positioned around a central vertical column were five seats, rather like bicycle saddle with high backs and headrests, where the operatives could sit with their concentration trained on the pilot". Zen and the teleport area likewise are not described as on screen, but then why should they be? This is Hoyle's book, not the designer's, though when there's a photo of the Liberator on the cover it might have been as well to be faithful to it. Hoyle's description of the ship puts the green bulb at the front. This disregard for the on-screen designs, though forgivable and even laudable, does get a bit careless at times. Slave, for example, is "nothing more impressive than a panel of tiny multi-coloured winking lights set into the bulkhead", and yet Avon later describes it as "very sophisticated by any standard". This carelessness — changing one bit of the script but not allowing for the consequences elsewhere — is common to all the books.

What is particularly irritating is that when Hoyle does change things he has a tendency to change the wrong things. All the characters are altered at his pen, but the reason for this is more comprehensible than for other changes. Unfortunately the consequences of it are similarly more irritating and lead to particularly shabby treatment of the women in Blake's crew. Sally Knyvette has commented at length on the sexism in the series, citing it as a reason for her desire to leave the programme after the first season. Her character, diluted from its original description, suffers even more markedly at Hoyle's hands which, given the opportunity he had to redress the balance, is a damn shame. In a sense it is a consequence of his efforts to enhance the hero status of Blake. Much explanatory dialogue which originally was distributed throughout the cast is transferred to Blake, and it is he that leads the party down to Cephlon rather than Avon. But if this is legitimate, it still does not excuse crap like Jenna being "ashamed" in her apology to Blake for having fallen asleep on watch, or Blake's "Let's do it my way, Cally" being sufficient for Cally to be silence on Aristo.

However, in spite of these transfers, Hoyle follows in Gareth Thomas's footsteps by failing on all fronts to make Blake a remotely interesting character, and his stock descriptions of the others — Gan is always "the big man", Vila "the little man" or similar — do them few favours either. Stock descriptions aside, though, Vila is undoubtedly the best drawn of the Seven. Where Blake is concerned characterisation is limited to adding the words "he said calmly" on the end of any speech where Blake proposes doing something daring or heroic, and just to make sure that Avon, who was always destined to be the series' lead, doesn't outshine him that character has more lines cut than any other (hence Blake replacing him as the leader on Cephlon). His cynical disinterest in all things revolutionary is heavily toned down which, while making his sudden interest in fighting the Federation in *Traitor* slightly more credible than it was on screen, raises question over just what the relationship between a book and a film or tv script should be. If the book is intended to be a novel in its own right then it should be free to do what it likes with the material, as long as it doesn't become unrecognisable. But if it makes no claims to be anything more than a novelisation then we could expect it to be more faithful to the text than Hoyle's seems to be. And in this case the change is detrimental to the Liberator scenario, removing a lot of the conflict that made the series more interesting than it would have been if all the 'heroes' had got on with one another. As it is, Hoyle reduces it to a straightforward good guys v bad guys story without any subtler motivations. The undisguisedly episodic nature of *Scorpio Attack* makes all this more palatable, but since the presence of the Federation is limited to only the middle instalment there is very little time to make the bad guys interesting. The single villain of *Rescue* does much to overcome this limitation, but he is only described from the outside. All we learn of him is what the others see; we never get inside his head, and since Hoyle is repeating Avon his tactic with Blake he does not want to let us. The disinterested side of Avon, though largely ignored in the previous two books, does make it impossible for Hoyle to turn Avon totally into the bland hero he made of Blake, and in the most traditional of the three episodes — *Traitor* — all the heroic stuff is done by Tarrant. *Traitor* is as out of place here as it was in season four of the series. Change the name and a little bit of the dialogue and it's a season two episode.

Characters aside, one of the more curious aspects of the three BLAKE novels is their depiction of technology. The series (or at least the first three seasons) did its best to portray as high a level of sophistication as possible, yet on paper this is reduced to descriptions of the contemporary technology of the time. So for example instead of the rather wonderful globes of the trial in *The Way Back* we have "two reels of tape fitted on to adjacent spindles", and there are repeated references to "solid state circuitry". Not only this, but the weapons shown in the programme were always very clean, yet Hoyle is insistent that everyone who dies does so as bloodily as possible. In *Scorpio Attack*, for example, Colonel Quute, who on screen is wrestled to the ground or clonked on the head or something like that. This is apparently is not interesting enough, so "a shot took Quute in the throat, ripping it open like a ripe fruit, and he was dead before he hit the ground".

Hoyle also reduces the idea of the mutoids introduced in *Seek-Locate-Destroy* to being mere androids. Artificial people are abundant in science fiction, and Terry Nation, presumably wise to the cliché, tried to do something different. It is true that the series never really had the scope to go into the idea of "humans with a high bionic rebuild" more thoroughly. The most it did was a nod to their function and Travis's knowledge of his pilot's past in *Duel*, and apart from a brief mention in *Trial* the idea was dropped for the second season. The books could have gone into the idea more, but sadly didn't.

Of course none of seasons two or three ever saw print, which means that the only episodes that did were from the two seasons held by fans to be the weakest. It also means that there is a considerable jump between the action of *Project Avalon* and of *Scorpio Attack*. Hoyle wisely elected not to attempt any bridging action or dialogue, treating the books as separate units and leaving the blurb on the back cover of the third to hint that events have moved on. Unfortunately his also omits any significant explanation in *Scorpio Attack* as to who everyone is, which, since the only surviving characters are Avon, Vila and Orac, leaves Tarrant and Dayna slightly in the lurch. They're just there. End of story. Where the characterisation of the new crew is concerned Hoyle's stock phrases are back with a vengeance. Dayna is "the black girl" and Soolin "the blond girl". The latter, given the three episodes selected for the book, has nothing at all to do and might as well have been left out.

Nevertheless, the rather tacky and comic-strip nature of the fourth BLAKE'S SEVEN season comes through in *Scorpio Attack* to make it a more cheaply entertaining and less demanding book than the previous two, even if it seems to have had less effort expanded on it. None of the three is particularly bad, but in the last ten years the standards of the genre have risen markedly. In amongst the highly variable STAR TREK range there is some fine writing. The DOCTOR WHO New Adventures and the later series novelisations have been setting standards that make the three BLAKE novels look distinctly lacklustre. In the unlikely event that the rest of the series ever sees print, they're going to need polishing up a lot.

Peter Linford

Blake's 7 — Afterlife
by Tony Attwood

AFTERLIFE is nowhere near as bad as most BLAKE'S SEVEN would have you believe. But that said, it isn't particularly good either, and there are several reasons for this.

Probably its greatest fault is that it does not remain true to the characterisation established in the series. Vila comes off best, although Attwood tends to concentrate on the alcoholic aspects of his personality, which was always the most obvious trait for writers to latch on to, and which became very over-used. Beyond that, he now seems determined to irritate Avon at every possible opportunity, just for the sheer hell of it, which becomes very annoying.

Personally, I had never much cared for Servalan anyway, but even I disliked the way Attwood turned her into nothing more than a thug. There are people who believe that only Avon should have been allowed to kill her, and while I'm not sure that I agree with that in principle, I have to admit that her death at the hands of Tony Attwood's wish-fulfillment woman Korell grates. Even worse than that though is the casual resurrection of Tarrant, late on in the book, only for him to die, eaten by a pack of tigers, a few pages later. What, quite simply, was the point?

By far the most interesting aspect of *Afterlife* is MIND. Considering this, it's a shame that the explanation of this concept, and Avon's sister's appearance, is limited to the last few pages of the book. Had the proposed sequel, *State of MIND*, been published, *Afterlife* might have been rather better remembered.

The idea of Blake as a figurehead is taken to interesting extremes here, and it could be seen as poetic that his death was (at least according to *Afterlife*) planned by his own followers, to prevent him destroying the myth which had formed around him. But again, I would argue with Attwood's description of him as a homicidal maniac. Avon had perhaps become such by the end of the series, but now we're expected to believe that this was the result of his little sister's meddling — and not the series of personal setbacks he'd experienced during the course of the series, as previously implied. In reinventing Avon, Attwood is treading on obviously dodgy ground.

Throughout, *Afterlife* can be summed up by the phrase 'nice ideas, shame about the execution'. Just as MIND is thrown away in the last pages, much of the book is taken up with a series of vignettes intended to echo the episodic structure of a season but which, within the book's page count, all leave one utterly unsatisfied.

The final problem with *Afterlife* is that it isn't BLAKE'S SEVEN. A book which writes out Servalan and Orac as quickly as possible, which reinterprets Avon and reduces Vila to his most obvious levels isn't faithful to the series, however many cute computers (Blake, KAT, Caro …) it may include. And for that reason, while *Afterlife* is far, far better than Attwood's later novel *Turlough and the Earthlink Dilemma*, it is in no way the 'authentic' sequel. **(5)**

Kate Brown

Avon — A Terrible Aspect
by Paul Darrow

A TERRIBLE ASPECT? No, a terrible disappointment. Re-reading this book, I soon realised why I hadn't re-read it of my own accord. It isn't actually bad, and it beats William Shatner's efforts at 'literature' any day, but it would never have been published had it not been written by Paul Darrow.

It soon becomes obvious that Paul Darrow has never watched *The Way Back*. The Federation he describes has little in common with that seen in the first episode transmitted. In the early stages of the book, this is unimportant, as the first section takes place at the time of Avon's birth, when the Federation could have been different, and concerns his father, Rogue Avon. But as the narrative moves closer and closer to the first scene of *Space Fall*, it becomes increasingly difficult to reconcile the bureaucratic tyranny of the first season with Darrow's Federation, which combines echoes of ancient Rome with a mafia-inspired hierarchy, through which one advances by training as an assassin.

Nor are the few characters from the series who appear as might be expected. Anna Grant is Avon's adopted sister, and their relationship borders on incest. She's presented as a tragic figure, driven into drug addiction and forced to witness her father's murder. It's an interesting idea, quite effectively done — but she could never have become Bartolemew, Central's most feared agent, had this been the case, and the glimpses of her seen in *Rumours of Death* conflict with the novel. Similarly, to judge by *A Terrible Aspect*, Tynus, Avon's ally in the great computer fraud, had little to fear from Avon, as the fraud is little more than a diversion and is barely mentioned in the book at all. Instead the bulk of the book concentrates on Avon's attempt to avenge his father's death, by killing his uncle, Axel Reiss, a task he finally accomplishes in the arctic killing grounds. Needless to say, the novel's account of how Avon came to find himself aboard the London doesn't tally with that given in *Rumours of Death* (though it does include a couple of nice touches) — Security wouldn't have suspected he was political, because here he quite obviously is.

One interesting suggestion is the idea that the current Federation is a relatively liberal one, soft on dissent. But this doesn't, unfortunately, make sense within the confines of the book, as Darrow places a massive rebel base within the solar system, on Nereid, which is hardly consistent with moves toward liberalisation. This point illustrates another of the novel's failings — though it refers to the Beyond, the intergalactic limits to the Federation's expansion, this Federation is restricted to the solar system (which apparently contains the Clouds of Magellan — the Milky Way's satellite galaxies), in the manner of the 30s Buck Rogers serials.

And that sums up *A Terrible Aspect*. Conceptually, it's thirty years (at least) out of date. It doesn't work as BLAKE'S SEVEN and it doesn't work as science fiction. That's not to say it's unreadable — it flows well enough (aside from the constant overdescription — 'twin-bladed serrated knives' and 'pump-action shotguns') and taken on its own terms, as a tale of murderous power struggles among greedy gangsters, it's quite enjoyable. But it is a teribile disappointment, regardless of who wrote it. **(5)**

Anthony Brown

PAUL DARROW
AVON
A TERRIBLE ASPECT
The authentic sequel to the great TV series
BLAKE'S 7
AFTERLIFE
TONY ATTWOOD
Compiler of the Programme Guide

Characters from Blake's 7 also appear, in various forms, in several other novels, two of which are reviewed here.

The Next Generation : Survivors
by Jean Lorrah
Titan Books; £2.50

Avon reappears here in the form of Adrian Dareau (aka Daryl Adin), a disgraced Starfleet security chief who's turned mercenary since he escaped en route to a penal colony and who, with the aid of his band of followers (among them a psychic and a minstrel — well, a poet …), is aiding a rebellion against the legitimate government of the planet Treva.

But things are never as simple as they seem, as Tasha Yar and Data discover when they are sent to liase with the Trevan leader. Out of touch with the Enterprise, things are further complicated because Adin is the man who rescued Tasha from the New Paris colony, who guided her through her academy career, and to whom she was engaged at the time of his disgrace. But Adin has always maintained his innocence, claiming he was set up, and only Tasha Yar could have been responsible if this was the case. Imagaine how *Rumours of Death* might have been if Avon had known that Anna had betrayed him …

Survivors has one distinct advantage compared with most NEXT GENERATION novels — it was written as the decision to kill off Tasha Yar was taken, allowing Jean Lorrah rather more than usual freedom with the emotions of her central character. The book takes place immediately before *Skin of Evil* (indeed, Tasha's funeral forms its last chapter), and her immediate death hangs over the entire book, giving it an added poignancy. It's one of the best NEXT GENERATION books to date, and it's a great pity that both its account of Tasha's origins and its view of Data's emotional development have been contradicted by later episodes.

Daryl Adin also appears, briefly, in a later NEXT GENERATION novel, *Metamorphosis*. **(8)**

Kill the Dead
by Tanith Lee
Legend Books; £3.50

Kill the Dead is the story of a ghost slayer called Parl Dro, who is Avon by another name, in another time. It's not surprising therefore that his path should soon cross that of a minstrel called Myal Lemayal, and a mystic called Ciddey …

That said, the relations between the characters are reinterpreted — Dro and Ciddey are enemies, as Dro exorcises Ciddey's beloved late sister early on in the book, winning her unending emnity, and as for Myal … well, you'll have to read it to see. For a BLAKE fan. half the fun of this book is seeing how Tanith Lee reinterprets the familiar characters, producing in the process a far more faithful novel than any of the official ones.

Taken on its own level, *Kill the Dead* is a densely-written piece, though well worth the effort it takes to read. Once the characters are established, it tells of Parl Dro's quest for Ghyste Mortua, the city of the dead. To Myal, the ultimate confrontation between the dead and their exorcist which will follow if he finds it could provide the subject for the epic ballad he needs to make his name, so he tags along, and their relationship develops along the way, until its base is finally explained by an utterly unexpected twist (which could never have been used in BLAKE'S SEVEN).

Even if it were only for curiosity value, this would be worth getting. As it is, it's unmissable. **(9)**

Anthony Brown

Once and future Blake

COULD it ever come back? It's difficult to say. BLAKE'S SEVEN is luckier than DOCTOR WHO, in that it has its 'Roddenberry', in the form of Terry Nation. But Roddenberry couldn't resurrect STAR TREK until Paramount were willing to back him, and it seems unlikely that the BBC will ever revive BLAKE'S SEVEN. Someone else could, of course, but would an American series be the same, or even one produced for ITV?

If someone else were to commission a revival, they would do so on the strength of the original's popularity. That in itself would have effects on a new series. Originally STAR TREK was about the crew of the Starship Enterprise, and any of that crew could have been transferred away to other ships. But the STAR TREK films were about the adventures of Kirk, Spock and McCoy — about the characters who'd become a cult. Only in THE NEXT GENERATION was the original balance restored.

Avon might have been the most important character of the fourth season, but he was then as mortal as any of the others — had he died on Gauda Prime and the others escaped, then there could still have been a fifth season. But now a new series would depend on him. Just as Robert Wise insisted that Spock should return in *Star Trek: the Motion Picture*, any producer worth his salt would insist on signing Paul Darrow. That would inevitably change the focus of the series, and perhaps for the worse. Some have attributed the fourth season's relation weakness to its over-emphasis of Avon …

That also places a time limit on the revival. A next generation, focusing on a new rebel band, could be made at any time. But if Avon (or Servalan) are to return, then the revival must happen soon. Even now you couldn't just pick up where you left off.

Terry Nation's 'Avon on Elba' would be a superb starting point, provided enough attention was paid to the new characters, and to Blake's legacy. The idea of teaming Avon with an almost messianic band, who don't know that Blake's dead (or who killed him …), and who believe that, like King Arthur, he will return in the galaxy's hour of greatest need, has distinct possibilities if properly built upon.

The proposed film seems a more dubious idea. It couldn't move forward — you couldn't introduce any worthwhile new characters in its running time. But would the alternative, some kind of BLAKE'S SEVEN's greatest hits, be any better. If set post-Gauda Prime, it brings to mind all those "Cally's not dead, Avon killed the clone, Blake was lying about Jenna and they find another Liberator" stories which seek to deny the series' unique pessimism. If set within the series, you have the problem of finding a sufficiently 'large' plot to merit a film without breaking continuity. And a film budget might mean repeating the mistakes of *Star Trek: the Motion Picture* — the effects could crowd out the dialogue and characterisation which, while originally needed to pad out the episodes, were the series' greatest strength.

Ultimately then, any revival would depend on the scripts. It's worrying, therefore, to remember that there were only ever three writers who really understood BLAKE'S SEVEN (within the first three seasons, that is, which is what a revival would seek to emulate). While Robert Holmes' stuff was marvellous, it wasn't really BLAKE'S SEVEN (it was just so good that this didn't matter), as the relative failure of *Traitor*, the only episode in which he tried to deal with the main elements of the series' format, shows. Terry Nation and Tanith Lee's contributions to the series have been long recognised, but until now there's been a tendency within BLAKE fandom to dismiss Chris Boucher as 'the man who wrote *Blake* and killed them all', as if this wiped out his earlier achievements (nine episodes, six of them classics — beat that!). A series produced by Nation without Boucher (or by Boucher without Nation) couldn't recapture the spirit of the original.

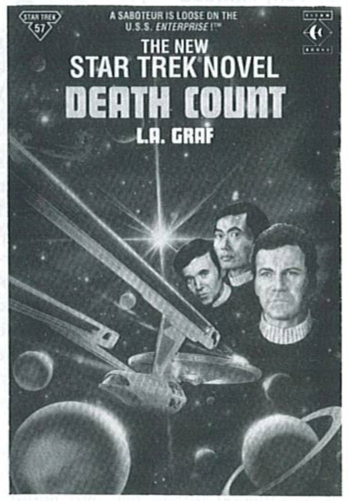
But in one sense, it doesn't matter whether it returns or not. Until now it was always possible that BLAKE'S SEVEN would be forgotten, as the BBC often seemed to hope it would. At one point in the eighties, this seemed to be happening, as fan clubs closed left, right and centre, until the American screening brought an influx of fresh blood. But now that the series is available on video, it isn't going to go away. That means that fandom's going to have to find itself a new role, as it no longer has to keep the memory alive. But then it's going to change anyway, as every fan who wants to can see the series any time (and our view of the series as a whole will change as well, as straight-forward but enjoyable episodes begin to pall through repetition, and the subtleties and silver linings of others lead to reassessment). But it's already won the most important victory against the Federation — like Blake, BLAKE'S SEVEN has won its immortality, even in death.

Anthony Brown

Below are DWB reviewers' ratings for all 52 episodes of BLAKE'S SEVEN, stretching over 26 BBC Videos.

1	The Way Back	9
	Space Fall	8
2	Cygnus Alpha	6
	Time Squad	4
3	The Web	7
	Seek-Locate-Destroy	7
4	Mission to Destiny	6
	Duel	8
5	Project Avalon	8
	Breakdown	4
6	Bounty	5
	Deliverance	5
7	Orac	6
	Redemption	6
8	Shadow	9
	Weapon	6
9	Horizon	5
	Pressure Point	8
10	Trial	8
	Killer	8
11	Hostage	4
	Countdown	7
12	Voice from the Past	5
	Gambit	10
13	The Keeper	4
	Star One	10
14	Aftermath	7
	Powerplay	8
15	Volcano	5
	Dawn of the Gods	3
16	The Harvest of Kairos	4
	City at the Edge of the World	9
17	Children of Auron	6
	Rumours of Death	9
18	Sarcophagus	10
	Ultraworld	5
19	Moloch	3
	Deathwatch	10
20	Terminal	10
	Rescue	8
21	Power	6
	Traitor	5
22	Stardrive	3
	Animals	1
23	Headhunter	8
	Assassin	6
24	Games	8
	Sand	9
25	Gold	10
	Orbit	9
26	Warlord	4
	Blake	9

Star Trek: Death Count
by LA Graf



ONLY one book this month, I'm afraid. I was hoping to look at Laurell Hamilton's *Nightshade* (are *all* tv related novels now called that?), but it hasn't turned up yet. So November's reviews will include that, and possibly Marshak and Culbreath's next lot of voyages into the totally unbelievable. But back to *Death Count*. So, Ms Graf — did you fare better with this one than the execrable *Ice Trap*?

Death Count deals with the Enterprise's involvement in a squabble between the Andorians and the Orions (yes, those of the green-skinned animal women. Thankfully the men don't writhe around with no clothes on). It begins on a star base, where Chekov is arrested, before the action shifts to the Enterprise, which is having trouble with a group of Starfleet auditors, as well as a mysterious saboteur.

What follows is a complex, but very enjoyable, thriller. The actual death count of this book is fairly high, and includes an extremely graphic description of what happens if you try to transport off a starship when its shields are up (you bounce back — in handy, bite-sized bits). The book builds to quite a nail-biting climax, as Andorians, Orions and the Enterprise attempt to rescue Chekov from a crippled shuttlecraft that is about to blow up.

Perhaps Ms Graf (neither myself nor *TV Zone*'s Mark Chappell can find out what her first name really is, but you can always bet that the writers who use initials are probably women) doesn't feel very comfortable with the Spock-Kirk-McCoy triangle: in *Ice Trap* she woefully mischaracterized all three of them. She seems to be more at home with the Sulu-Chekov-Uhura group, and very well she does too All three of them are fairly deep and believable people, who get to monopolize most of the action in the book. It is refreshing to see the other regular characters get a look it, once in a while.

All in all, a vast improvement. I hope she writes another. (7)

Craig Hinton

A picture book for smegheads everywhere

The Official Red Dwarf Companion
by Bruce Dessau
Titan Books; £6.99

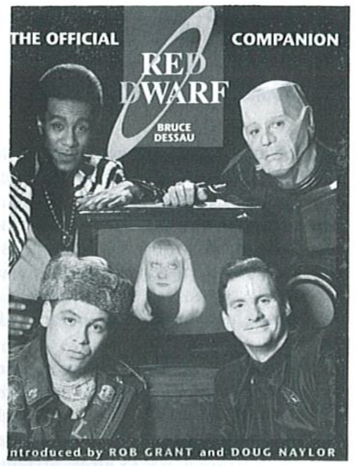
WITH RED DWARF mania taking a grip both inside and outside the world of hardcore telefantasy, I don't know exactly what to make of this new offering from Titan. For the casual reader it may make a super Christmas gift. For the hardened tv comedy devotee, it is certainly no work by Roger Wilmut (the noted comedy historian). At first I was not impressed by either production or content, aside from the fact that the pages did appear to be a veritable blaze of colour. But with only 96 pages for £6.99, one would expect each leaf to be performing a dance anyway.

The book sets out to be an overview of BBC2's success story, and since this is all it sets out to be, it cannot really fail. It is also a 'first work' on the show, and so cannot be judged against other volumes on the subject. The closest thing for comparison has to be Fleetway's *Red Dwarf Smegazine*, which I have to admit to being amazed to see living beyond its sixth issue. This book is far more serious, but also very dry in its approach.

The principle problem with RED DWARF seems to be lack of material (although this has seldom upset Six of One with their study of THE PRISONER). For a start, one is continually left with the impression that nobody has ever seen the first season. Whilst I agree that RED DWARF as it is known today really began with its second season, nobody ever seems to discuss classics such as *Future Echoes* or *Me*^{2}. Along with the comic, the videos and the T-shirts, Bruce's book seems firmly rooted in the post-Kryten era. Indeed, one of the major omissions throughout the whole volume is that there are only two photographs to indicate that Norman Lovett was ever part of the show's regular cast. This is a great shame since Holly, particularly in its original incarnation, often had some of the very best lines in the first two seasons, but has since been usurped by the more versatile electronics of Kryten.

The book opens with a super introduction by Rob Grant and Doug Naylor, the scribes behind the series itself. And a very amusing introduction it is too! Because of the large photographic content (mainly from later seasons), the text is actually quite sparse, but what there is has been generally well-written by Bruce and contains a few surprises along the way. One of the principle drawbacks though is that little 'new' about the series is revealed. The cast and crew have been giving regular interviews, not just in *Red Dwarf Smegazine* but also in *TV Zone* and *Starburst*, and most of what has been said before is reiterated again. Not that this is the fault of the writer, who does a very good job of tying all this information together. However, the text does not seem to dig very deep and is content to float at a somewhat basic level of examination.

After the intro we get five Red Dwarf Personnel Files: Lister, Rimmer, Kryten, the Cat and Holly. The first four combine a brief look at the characters from the series with a short biog of each of the artistes playing them. Bruce's text makes no secret of the senile computer's decreasing role in the series, and amongst the three Hattie Hayridge stills there is a lonely shot of Norman Lovett, with little about either actress or actor.



Two pages cover the 'special guests' who have appeared in the show before it's straight into the Episode Guide. These are disappointing. Seasons One and Two are dealt with in two pages for all six episodes, whilst the later episodes are allocated a full page each. This hardly does justice to some of the classics from Season Two in particular. Also, the synopses are very short and serve only as a teaser to the episode, hardly what one expects in an 'essential guide' (as the back cover blurb claims). There are no credits, technical details, dates, working titles or anything to accompany these entries. The photographs throughout this section are generally excellent — but I suspect the primary reason why the initial twelve episodes get such a raw deal is the total lack of visual material (the BBC not realising what a hit they were going to have on their hands never took many snap shots).

After the episode guide, we come to a series of articles about different aspects of making the show. These are well-written and suitably illustrated, although the hardened tv expert or RED DWARF devotee probably won't discover much. Grant and Naylor talk about writing, and there are also contributions from executive producer Paul Jackson, designer Mel Bibby, visual effects supremo Peter Wragg, costumier extraordinaire Howard Burden and make-up whizz Andria Pennell. Once again, this regrettably eliminates nearly all mention of the first two seasons, and the photographs reflect this by being generally of recent origin. However, some interesting visuals do appear in the form of special effects shots of the Despair Squid (from *Back to Reality*, a creation that didn't make it to the finished programme) and also some of Howard Burden's costume design sketches.

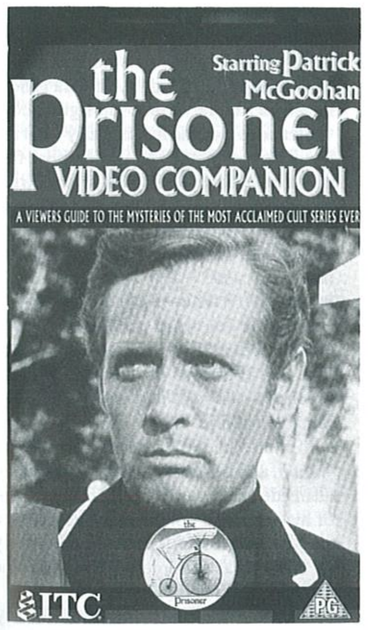
The penultimate section, entitled 'The Future', talks briefly (and nowhere near comprehensively enough) about the US pilot episode, and since this is the 'official' book one wonders why no photographs could have been obtained to give us some feeling for the Americanised version of RED DWARF. There is then a plug for all the relevant merchandise (comics, T-shirts, books, tapes, etc.), although oddly enough there is no mention of the forthcoming Virgin RED DWARF book which, considering it is written by the two wacky chaps who do *Red Dwarf Smegazine*, presumably also has some sort of 'official' status.

Finally, to warm my heart, I find two pages of delight. A very colourful spread of production credits to the first thirty episodes giving cast and principle production crew (no transmission dates though, ho hum). And yes … it even solves the mystery of who exactly sings the theme song!

Knowing that a similar volume from Virgin is on the way to us in early 1993, I feel that the best recommendation to be made regarding this book is to wait until the competition has come out, and then choose between the two. Certainly Titan's version, whilst well-designed, is not in the earth-shattering league of other 'essential' reference books for the television fan, although it is a competent workmanlike effort.

(5 — for the sheer colour)

Andrew Pixley


Starring Patrick McGoohan
the Prisoner
VIDEO COMPANION
A VIEWERS GUIDE TO THE MYSTERIES OF THE MOST ACCLAIMED CULT SERIES EVER
ITC
PG

The Prisoner Video Companion
ITC 1591; £10.99

IT IS unfortunate that ITC sold the video rights to THE PRISONER to Polygram many moons ago now that the cult series has once again become a hot property. It is even more unfortunate that in their search for material to release in conjunction with the series' repeat on Channel 4 the researchers at ITC came across the American documentary, *The Prisoner Video Companion* and worse still decided to release it in this country.

The history of this tape goes back to the publication in 1988 of the book *The Official Prisoner Companion* by Matthew White and Jaffer Ali. This sketchily researched paperback was universally panned by fans of the series because of several glaring factual errors and its fascination with shallow philosophical questions requiring long nonsensical answers. Enter MPI, the company that released THE PRISONER on video in the USA and Canada. Having already produced a tape containing the alternative version of *The Chimes of Big Ben* they decided to increase their catalogue of THE PRISONER videos by the addition of their own 55 minute documentary about the series based on the White and Ali book. A script was produced by tacking various paragraphs from the book together in a random order. A series of clips from the other MPI videos were then edited together to illustrate the text and thus *The Prisoner Video Companion* was born.

The tape consists entirely of an American narration over clips from the series with the odd computer graphic thrown in to show that the production company owns a computer. The narrator shows no interest and little knowledge of the show making several mistakes as he rushes through his script; "A, B, C" instead of *A, B and C*, the Prisoner lives at "Buckingham Palace" as opposed to Buckingham Place etc. Other mistakes are in the original script: The Butler is stated to be the only character to appear in every episode! Not only does The Prisoner appear in every episode (this is why the series is called THE PRISONER as opposed to THE BUTLER) but Angelo Muscat does not appear in several episodes.

Many of the clips featured have no relevance to the narrative and there are a couple of clips that seem to have been inserted just to fill up the tape. One particularly long excerpt from *A Change of Mind* springs to mind. But one could forgive these errors if it was not for the amount of utter rubbish talked about the series. The writers do not seem to understand that THE PRISONER was primarily a television series intended to entertain, not a unit of an Open University philosophy degree. Theories about McGoohan's ideas behind the series range from interpretations of the scriptures to incitement to world-wide revolution in order to prevent "pop", the inevitable destruction of the Earth.

I would only recommend the tape for its curiosity value. If you want to buy it for a laugh, £10.99 is a pretty expensive laugh. The British version of the tape differs from its American original in only one respect; the closing credits, which used to credit Bruce Campbell, the North American coordinator of Six of One, have been removed to be replaced by the ITC logo. **(2)**

Anthony McKay

End of the line

Mostly Harmless
by Douglas Adams
William Heinemann Ltd; £12.99

Mostly Harmless, 'the fifth book in the increasingly inaccurately named *The Hitch-Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy* trilogy', is a very funny book. In fact, it is an extremely funny book. Unfortunately, its notable qualities tend to lie in the direction of funny peculiar as opposed to funny, ha-ha!

Douglas Adams has been writing about Arthur Dent, Ford Prefect, et al in some form or other for around sixteen years now. And sixteen years is a long time. Things develop and change, styles mellow from the razor undergraduate wit of the loud seventies, to a gentler, almost morose atmosphere of the Nineties. The original radio series was fresh, wild and wacky. Although Arthur Dent's home planet (i.e. Earth) had been demolished to make way for a hyperspace by-pass, seldom was there time to dwell on his loss because of all the adventure and excitement and really wild things which Ford Prefect had saved him to get caught up in. Towards the end of both radio series though, a hollow emptiness pervades the air: a sense of futility when not only is the Ultimate Question to Life, the Universe and Everything cocked up, but the man ultimately controlling the Universe is a quiet gent, incredibly removed from reality.

This similar style really started to pervade Adams' work in the third book (*Life, the Universe and Everything*), although at its core was still a good fun adventure, and some wild and wacky ideas. *So Long and Thanks for all the Fish* was a meandering, wordy, long-winded mess (and is thankfully almost totally ignored in this new volume, with the character of Fenchurch being dispensed with in between the two). *Mostly Harmless* certainly scores over the last volume, but still comes nowhere near Adams' far fresher and original work of the eighties (e.g. *Dirk Gently's Holistic Detective Agency*) which he actually seems to have enjoyed writing.

Mostly Harmless seems laboured, though it starts extremely well. The opening pages (about the attempts to power spaceships using bad news — which travels faster than anything else in the cosmos) are truly proper *Hiker* material, and one can almost hear Peter Jones' incredulous voice reading the lines. After that, we get the setting up of a variety of different narratives. On a version of Earth somewhere we meet a Trillian who never went off with Zaphod, and who is visited by some extremely funny aliens who have amnesia. Ford Prefect meanwhile is back at the offices of *The Hitch-Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, finding that all manner of disturbing changes have occured. Arthur Dent is waiting for death to come and take him after his visit to Stavromula Beta, killing time by searching for an Earth-like planet to live on.

With the situations established we wait for the lifestreams of the main protagonists to cross in the latest escapade. And we wait. And we wait. And we wait. The Ford Prefect storyline jogs along nicely in true *Hiker's* style. The Trillian storyline takes a long rest. And the Arthur storyline, whilst largely superfluous anyway, is vaguely amusing.

Events move rapidly to a conclusion when Arthur suddenly learns that he is a father. Now the once lively book sinks into pages of emotional anguish as he tries to understand the behaviour of his daughter. There are very few laughs along the way from now onwards, but the so far directionless plot does start to make some sense. The main bulk of the story is extremely compressed at the end of the tome, and all of a sudden it's all over — like having the restaurant table cleared when, after ploughing through a huge bowl of soup, the main dish is whisked away from you as you take your first mouthful.

Despite this, Adams' writing and particularly descriptive passages are most pleasing and evocative, and one continually gets the feeling that he would rather be writing a serious science-fiction novel about culture clashes instead of having to weave Arthur, Ford and Trillian into another outing. There are moments of sheer delight along the way though, notably Trillian's historically fascinating visit to another planet, which she dutifully records on her video camera. But the laughs are few and far between, and the skeleton of the storyline needs a lot more meat on it.

A disappointment after such a long wait, but it now seems that Arthur, Ford and Trillian will finally be allowed to rest, undisturbed by further enforced resurrections. **(4)**

Andrew Pixley

The Indispensible Guide to the Galaxy

Doctor Who — The Handbook: The Fourth Doctor
by Howe-Stammers-Walker
Virgin Books; £3.99

TO SAY that this book is a publisher's idea would belittle what is a rather useful volume, although by the same token it is not a work of such massive importance as *Doctor Who — The Sixties* from the same trio. It is literally a handbook, a useful guide to all manner of bits and pieces about DOCTOR WHO in the days when Tom Baker was the star, ratings were riding high and organised fandom was newborn, forcing itself into the world and ever-eager for information.

Like *The Sixties*, the book is trying to capture the essence of a seven year period in a variety of ways. These range from interview extracts, through an 'episode guide' (for want of a better term), to some short essays examining important aspects of Mr Baker's tenure as the travelling Time Lord.

After a very well written Foreword, the scene is set to review the years 1974 to 1981. The atmosphere, for one who lived through this era and was old enough to retain memories of it, is suitably nostalgic, and it is demonstrated (as with *The Sixties*) that these guys are not simply content to rehash all the facts we've read before in new and interesting ways. They are intent upon setting events in some form of context, which works well throughout the book.

The book is divided into three main sections: The Doctor, Fiction and Fact. The Doctor looks at both the actor Tom Baker himself, and the character which he portrayed to varying degrees of uncontrollability on the screen. Tom Baker is described in his own words, anecdotes and comments from a very wide range of interviews (several of which may be new to even the more hardened Bakerphile). These have been well chosen, often showing how Tom's attitude to the programme and life in general has varied when plotted in a chronological sense. Full references are given for eager researchers to delve further into the source material, assuming their thirst is not quenched by this book. The chapter about the Fourth Doctor is far more routine, and whilst well-written contains few surprises.

Fiction is the longest section in the work, and for want of a better description, is essentially an 'episode guide'. Oh no — not again, everybody yawns, but no, don't write it off that easily. This is not simply a rehash of Jean-Marc Lofficier's *The Programme Guide*, but in fact contains more detailed or alternative information to this earlier journal. There is no cast list for example, but a more comprehensive table of writers, directors, designers, musicians, etc., is catered for in an appendix. What each story is given here is title, serial code, transmission date and time (to nearest minute) for first runs and repeats, duration to the nearest second, audience size and chart position. Following this first table is a run-down of the location or Ealing film dates, and then the studio recording days indicating studio (where known). A story synopsis attempts to cram in as many special nouns as possible (including obscure stuff like the name of the R1C in *Underworld* or the location of the Nine Travellers in *The Stones of Blood*). Next comes a list of Who Fax about the production of the show and its novelisation, and each story is rounded off with a critical overview in the form of Comment. All in all, a bit like a mini-*In Vision*.

Rewriting the Myth is then quite a novel little chapter considering the changes to established DOCTOR WHO continuity in the Baker era, and also what trends and facts were laid down for his successor's storylines. This is one of the 'mini-essays' of which there are quite a few in the third and final section.

Fact is broken down into five chapters. The first of these, Production Development, looks at the changes behind-the-scenes and how the show kept evolving in the late 70s. The second chapter, From Script to Screen, is one of the highlights of the book, and must be the dream of many DOCTOR WHO researchers. *The Frame* trio here have managed to get Chris Barry, Barry Newbery and L Rowland Warne together in one room, screened them a print of *The Brain of Morbius*, and then recorded all their reminiscences about how the story was actually made. This wonderful idea leads to a very different and successful approach of showing how a DOCTOR WHO serial is put together. It also serves as a basic article on how a tv drama is assembled for the uninitiated.

The third chapter, Effects Development, charts how Tom Baker's reign took DOCTOR WHO from the crude yellow fuzziness of CSO-land to the crisper climes of Scene-syncs-ville. And for when the artistes could actually get outside the confines of Television Centre, Pebble Mill and Ealing, the fourth chapter looks at the locations used twixt *Robot* and *Logopolis* — and is in some ways an improvement on both last summer's Marvel special and *Private Who*'s 25th Anniversary Special (excellent publications both, but this book tends to supersede them for the Baker era).

Selling the Doctor ties up all the assorted loose ends, and is a quite fascinating hotch-potch of items from spoofs of DOCTOR WHO in various media, through press attention on the companions, the marketing of the serials abroad, the growth of fandom, the merchandise, and finally how Tom Baker's Doctor actually scored in the ratings. Following the Afterword comes the aforementioned tables of credits for serials 4A to 5V, bringing us to the close of the 256-page tome. One of the few format criticisms I have for the book is that it could do with an index. Apart from that, it's quite easy to use, with the titles of the chapters clearly marked atop each page.

Whilst I would label *Doctor Who — The Sixties* as 'essential', I would place *The Handbook: The Fourth Doctor* as more of a 'luxury'. An avid follower of CMS's *In Vision* would probably have had a far more detailed insight of this era, and so may not require the book. On the other hand, a reader who had seen little reference material to date may find it a mine of information. As an historian, I find the fact that a variety of data is now locatable in one volume is of great convenience to me, and that is really what the handbook is about (and for all those frequent occasions when you're on a train and a fellow traveller says *"Excuse me, you don't happen to know the running time of The Talons of Weng-Chiang part three do you? It's just slipped my memory"*, whereupon the eager Bakerphile can whip out this very book and immediately supply the required answer of *"Twenty-one minutes, fifty-six seconds — one of the shorter episodes I think you'll find."*).

In short, the information is here if you want it, and it's well-written, reliable and all inside one cover. It's an odd assortment of material, and not meant to be read in a single sitting for fun, but can stand proudly on the shelf as a source of facts and some thoughtful essays. **(8)**

Andrew Pixley

The ultimate A-Z?

Doctor Who — The Universal Databank
by Jean-Marc Lofficier
Doctor Who Books; £4.99

WHEN this book dropped through the letter box, I though for a moment that somebody was mailing me bricks. It's a big book. You may think some of the New Adventures are big, but they ain't got nothing on this. This is an inch and a quarter thick. My main fear is whether the spine will stand up to such use as a reference book (with visions of the hundreds of copies of *Papillon* that I used to see in second-hand bookshops that had to be held together by rubber bands). In all the book is 480 pages, and rounds off Jean-Marc's trilogy of reference works.

It's not only a big book to review, but a tricky one. Main problem is that it's an A to Z, a complete glossary of all things Whovian. As such I've not obviously read every entry, but have skimmed through the pages picking out entries of particular interest or note. But that's not the only reason why I find it tricky to review.

In his introduction, Jean-Marc states that the book has nearly driven him mad. I can believe that. What is between these covers is a helluva lot of work, and quite lovingly done too. In fact the research is quite admirable, and I would give 9 out of 10 for it. The problem is with the rules which the author has set down, the boundaries which he has agreed to work within, a set of conditions which at the end of the day produce a tome that can be confusing or unreliable.

Now don't get me wrong. 90% of this book is probably perfectly okay and I have not argument with it at all. It is also a vast improvement over David Saunders' aborted *Encyclopædia of the Worlds of Doctor Who* project. Whilst the Picadilly versions did of course boast some super illustrations from Tony Clark, it had a variety of shortcomings (apart from the omission of Castrovalva). Firstly, it was more expensive. Secondly, it only went up to the letter R. Thirdly, it only covered stories up to and including *The Trial of a Time Lord* and did not really embrace characters and names from *K9 and Company*. Fourthly, it intermingled material that never appeared on television (eg. first names for the Deciders in *Full Circle*, the name of the corpse in *Destiny of the Daleks*, etc.).

The problem with Jean-Marc's version is that whilst it overcomes many of the above flaws, his basic objective is certainly not what I was looking for in an ideal glossary, nor what I suspect others will be either. Although he has taken the television material as the basic source, he has supplemented this with extra detail from novelisations. Nothing wrong there, you may say — but the problem is that there is little indication as to what facts derive from what source.

One of the most frequent kinds of query I get at *DWM's* Matrix Data Bank is caused by the conflict between a novelisation and its television equivalent, particularly where great liberties have been taken in retailoring the story for the printed page. And of course this all leads back to one of the current DOCTOR WHO debates: what is the DOCTOR WHO canon? Does it include *Shada*? Does it include *Slipback*? Does it include the unmade Season 23 stories? Hey, hang on ... I'm doing a book review here, let's not get drawn into that one!

Accepting that Jean-Marc has laid down his groundrules in this fashion, there is little to criticise and probably 99% of the entries are fine. Indeed, much of his speculative input is again quite ingenious (such as suggesting that Zoë's Parapsychology School would become the Brotherhood of Logicians). However, there is still likely to be confusion over a lot of bits and pieces.

Such as? Well, we've got all sorts of material that is purely from the novelisations: Icthar is also known as K'to; Dr Quinn's first name is Matthew instead of John; the mortuary attendants in *Vengeance on Varos* had names; Commander Hilred was also known as Commander Hildred; all manner of wonderful words dreamt up by David Fisher in his books (eg. Heresiarch); the policeman in *The Feast of Steven* having the names of the Z-CARS cast; the American tourist in *Silver Nemesis* being called Mrs Hackensack instead of Mrs Remington; Donald Seagrave being the policeman's name in *Logopolis*; umpteen names for rebel Xerons, Morok guards, Marie Celeste crewmembers, Hecate worshippers, Rorvik's crew (eg. Jos, yet Kilroy who is actually named in part one is omitted), and various pets in *The Dæmons*. As you can see, the problem with the book is that although it is comprehensive, you end up doubting which references come from the printed page and which hail from the cathode ray tube.

There's a fair few mis-spellings too (which is awkward considering the nature of the book). 'Menoptra' is spelt 'Menoptera' throughout, 'Necros' is still referred to as 'Nekros', the pub in *The Android Invasion* becomes the 'Fleur De Lis', and so on. Jean-Marc attempts to give all alternate spellings where several seem to be in use, although I have to admit that I would rather have had the one spelling as it appeared in the script, in *Radio Times* or on-screen. However, Jean-Marc must still be commended in the same breath for giving three versions of the name 'Mechanoid', all of which are officially given in the programme.

As for actual errors — not many. It is debatable whether the miscreants in *The War Games* could be termed 'War Lords'. Popular opinion is now that, not matter how dull it sounds, they were called the 'Aliens' and merely led by a War Lord. Never was Polly's surname given as 'Lopez' — this is a common fan mistake emanating from her Chameleon double's name of Michelle Leuppi. Also in *Attack of the Cybermen*, Bill and David were not Lytton's policemen, they were sewer workers. Nor was Jack ever Captain Railton's first name; this was presumably the character played by Terry Walsh in *Death to the Daleks* part one.

I also choked a bit on seeing the blatant inclusion of 'Professor Bernard Quatermass' for the Bernard referred to in *Remembrance of the Daleks*. The presence of 'Margaret Thatcher' caused a similar effect, but I see that the PM referred to as Jeremy in *The Green Death* is not listed at all (unless this is the reference to a member of the Wholewheal commune).

On a more useful note, there are also generic entries which cover a variety of subjects which can then be checked by cross-references. Amongst these themes are 'Brains', 'Business', 'Diseases', 'Evil', 'Hypnotism', 'Magic', 'Nuclear Wars', 'Prisons', 'Religion' and even 'Undersea'.

The only other things to comment on are another beautiful Escher-style cover from the talented Mr Pearson, and that the last 16 pages are errata and omissions from *The Terrestrial Index*. And before people start spotting my name in these listings, no — I have nothing to do with some of the more fanciful story titles for early *TV Comic Annual* material. For a more accurate listing of the comic strips and their titles, I'd refer anyone to forthcoming reference material in *Doctor Who Collected Comics*, which I've found both impressive and reliable.

The detail of the book is superior to that by David Saunders (the names of many minor characters in *The Mind of Evil*, for example, have been lovingly listed). However, I still feel that the definitive A to Z has not yet been produced, and probably never will be. If you're after an A to Z, then get this book. But for goodness sake, take the origins of the material in it with a pinch of salt. **(7)**

Andrew Pixley

Tardis in Durham
17th-18th October 1992

WHO says big is best? Tardis in Durham made that theory extinct with the third of their annual DOCTOR WHO conventions staged in Durham over the weekend of October 17th-18th. Almost two hundred attendees, the largest number to date, piled into the superbly-equipped Three Tuns Hotel, with everyone receiving great value for money as Josie and Stephen Collins put the DWAS to shame with a guest list far superior to the recent PanoptiCon, and on a far smaller budget too.

One policy the DWAS would do well to learn from is contracting star guests in advance rather than hyping up their events months beforehand with vain promises of celebrities that fail to materialise over the weekend, inevitably disappointing the many who select which conventions to attend on the strength of guest information. Last year TiD scored a coup in contracting Anthony Ainley well in advance of the event, and this year it was the turn of Jon Pertwee who sadly, it must be said, is increasingly displaying many of the characteristics more often associated with his predecessor twice removed.

(above left) Sylvester McCoy and Jon Pertwee; *(above right)* John Levene and Frazer Hines

© Keith Armstrong

Whilst undoubtedly a star and highly professional and entertaining in front of an audience, offstage some of his asides and downright rudeness can leave a lot to be desired.

On the other hand, the other three main guests would be welcome at my party any time. Sylvester McCoy was as chirpy as ever, although his frustration at the BBC's short-sightedness as he debated the show's future with the audience was plain to see, while Frazer Hines and John Levene are two of the most charming gentlemen you could ever hope to meet. Frazer had to endure a rescreening of his THIS IS YOUR LIFE programme before taking to the stage, as always exhibiting the same boyish charm that made Jamie such a likeable and popular character 25 years ago. Quite telling was his revelation that he didn't appear as billed at PanoptiCon simply because they never followed up their initial invitation and arrogantly assumed he would show up over the weekend — without checking with his agent as to whether he would actually be free!

John Levene is quite simply the most generous and sincere guest any convention could wish for, as always going beyond the call of duty to ensure that a good time was had by all. Apparently he went to much effort to get up to Durham, and then insisted on waiving his fee in favour of Mencap, TiD's supported charity — a *true* professional! Gary Russell, Alister Pearson and Mark Gatiss were also on hand with anecdotes and helpful hints on how to become an accomplished editor, artist and writer respectively!

All in all, TiD exuded an informal warmth all but non-existent at the larger events, though with their popularity growing rapidly every year, I hope that they never become a victim of their own success. **(9)**

Gary Leigh